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# MASTERPIECES OF INDIAN SCULPTURE

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# MASTERPIECES



# OF INDIAN SCULPTURE

Introduction and Notes by  
RUSTAM J. MEHTA



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# INTRODUCTION

*'No Sculpture in the world is charged with such a sense of ecstasy and poetry as Indian Sculpture.'*

—RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

## INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

The archaeological finds at the sites of the Indus Valley Civilization of the third millennium B.C. conclusively prove that the sculptural art of India has at least a proto-historic origin. Further, the discoveries of statuettes and other objects at Mohenjo-Daro in Sind, Harappa and Rupar, both in the Punjab, and Lothal in Gujarat clearly reveal the fact that even at that early date the plastic art of the country was not in a rudimentary evolutionary phase of development, but actually was at a stage of artistic decadence.

The sculptural finds at the sites of the Indus Valley Civilization consist mostly of steatite engraved seals (Pl. 1) and terracotta figurines—men and animals—limestone heads and the now famous 'dancer' in bronze (Pl. 2). The depiction of the animals on the seals, especially the bull, further confirms the fact that here was the art of a people already rich in artistic experience and expression, the creation of men fully familiar with animal anatomy.

However, the bronze figure of presumably a dancer (Pl. 2) is the finest from the point of view of sophisticated artistry. The slender waist, the attenuation of the legs and in general the wiry strength emanating from the figure have all the signs of the aesthetic expression realised at Amaravati almost three thousand years later.

## THE ARYANS

Now comes a long period of stagnation. The peoples of the Indus Valley Civilization, whoever they were though probably of Dravidian stock, disappeared, to be replaced by the invading Aryans from outside the frontiers of the country (c. 1500 B.C.). Perhaps the art and its ideals of the conqueror and the conquered fused to form a new mode of artistic expression. The original inhabitants of Dravidian stock migrated further and further to the south and by about 1200 B.C. the Aryans from Central or Western Asia were the masters of the northern parts of the sub-continent of India. By the sixth century B.C. Brahmanical Hinduism was being

formulated. And the middle of the same century also witnessed the birth of two other religions: Buddhism and Jainism. The former was to become the state religion of the mighty emperor Asoka of the Mauryan dynasty and create some of the earliest sculptural art of great merit.

#### THE GREEK INVASION

India was to experience still another foreign invasion, this time by Alexander the Great who invaded the Punjab and crossed the river Indus in February 326 B.C. to win a great battle on the banks of the river Jhelum. He was well received by the people of the rich and highly cultured city of Taxila (Takshasila). On his withdrawal he left behind many Greek settlements and Greek influence was destined to play some part in the sculptural art of India, to culminate in the Gandharan phase almost three to four centuries later.

#### THE MAURYANS

On the death of Alexander, internecine strife broke out to fill in the void left by the disappearance of Greek domination. In 322-21 B.C., a supporter of the alien conqueror, who had received military training under him, Chandragupta Maurya, founded the Mauryan dynasty that was to become one of the greatest and most powerful kingdoms of pre-Christian times. This era was also to be a landmark in the history of Indian art, especially after Asoka, the founder's grandson, had ascended the throne, his coronation taking place in 269 B.C.

Asoka (c. 273-232 B.C.) turned to Buddhism after many years of fighting and cruel bloodshed and wholesale massacre. So devout a Buddhist he became, so great was his belief in the new faith, that he tried his level best to propagate it as widely as possible. It was he who erected the many stone pillars bearing his edicts (Pl. 3) and many monasteries (Viharas) for the Buddhist monks where they could live and practise their faith in peace and isolation, far from the turmoil of the outside world.

Some of the earliest examples of Mauryan art are the colossal stone Yakshas and Yakshis, tree-spirits associated with the fertility of Nature, although it is quite possible that these colossal actually pre-date Mauryan times as Vincent Smith suggests. Although their pose is static, the large scale of the sculpture and its feeling of solidity give the figures the right to be claimed as true works of art.

However, the Asokan edict pillars are better known, and especially their capitals with animal motifs. The abacus is also carved in relief with animal figures like those of the bull, elephant, lion, etc. The finest examples are the lion-topped capital of the Sarnath pillar—now the central motif of the Indian national flag—and the bull capital found at Rampurva (Pl. 3).

The animal figures of the Asokan pillars are in the round and rouse the admiration of all for the artist's sense of anatomy and structural form, the sensitivity of expression, and in this the animal sculpture of the Mauryas has rarely been surpassed.

Does this animal sculpture exhibit traces of a foreign influence? Controversy has raged about this for years. It is true that the pillars bear the high polish distinctive of Persepolitan art, but the figuration of the sculpture, especially the sensitive modelling of the Rampurva bull, is nothing but truly Indian. Can one draw an analogy between this bull and those on the Mohenjo-Daro seals? There is no doubt that the Mauryan sculptors were highly skilled. So, even if the technique of finish was alien and borrowed from abroad, the sculptural treatment was Indian. The bull and the elephant are as the Indian artist knew them, though the same cannot be said of the lion, which was perhaps unfamiliar in India, and does bear resemblances to the lion sculpture so reminiscent of ancient Mesopotamian art. As H. G. Rawlinson so rightly says, 'whatever India borrowed she assimilated and made her own.'

### THE SUNGAS

Round about 185 B.C. saw the end of the Mauryas, the last of whom, Brihadratha, was assassinated by Pushymitra, one of his generals, who later founded the Sunga dynasty, and which lasted in the north of the country for over a century. While the Sungas were establishing themselves in the North, a dynasty called the Andhras ruled in the Deccan after overthrowing the short-lived regime of the Kanvas about 28 B.C. This period also saw the flowering of Buddhist art and many Viharas and Chaitya halls were built in secluded hills, far from the rush of life. The Chaitya halls in particular are examples of skilled architecture though simple in construction. It is apparent that they were replicas in stone of the earlier wooden structures, many of which must have existed in ancient times, but none of which is known due to the perishable nature of the material used. The technique already achieved by the workers in wood was transferred to the constructions in stone.

As a matter of fact, Buddhist art may be said to have its beginnings in the Chaitya halls erected at the four places which witnessed the four Great Events of the Buddha's worldly life, as well as in other places. The Stupas and the Viharas thus play an important part in early Buddhist art. The Buddha was born at Kapilavastu, achieved his Enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya, preached his First Sermon in the Deer Park at Sarnath and achieved Nirvana or the Final Liberation at Kusinagara. His conception and birth are represented symbolically by an elephant and his relinquishing of the worldly pleasures of life by a horse, the Bodhi tree stands for the



Great Enlightenment and the Wheel for the preaching of the Sermon of the Law; the Stupa signifies his Parinirvana or surcease from Samsara—the rounds of birth and death.

The sculpture of Bharut can correctly be attributed to the Sunga period. To this era may also be ascribed the sculptured railings of Bodh Gaya and some of the very early art of Amaravati, Bhaja, Bedsa and Caves Nos. 9 and 10 at Ajanta. Although sculpture in deep relief abounded in this period, we find very little work in the full round. Most of the relief sculpture of this age is of a secular and often decorative nature, although legends from the previous lives of the Buddha are freely represented, especially at Bharut. Sir John Marshall has rightly pointed out that 'in the Maurya and Sunga periods, the sculptor viewed his plastic compositions from only one direction,' that is, he observed the law of frontality. It would be correct to say that the Sanchi sculpture is of a more decorative nature than that either at Bharut or Bodh Gaya. There is no doubt that the beautiful sculptured gateways of the Great Stupa at Sanchi were constructed under the patronage of the Andhra kings at a later date. The pillars and architraves are covered with incidents from the Buddha's worldly life, narration of the Jatakas, many decorative designs, and a few nature deities, Yakshas and Yakshis (Pl. 7). A close study of the Sanchi sculpture gives us a very good idea of the social life of the time—how the people lived, what they wore, their personal ornaments, hair styles, architecture and equipment. These sculptures thus form an excellent record of social history and have much to instruct the student of Indian life and culture. They further clearly illustrate that the artists who worked on the stone gateways were originally carvers in wood and ivory and their minute workmanship had been carried over into their later creations in the hard material of stone.

Early Buddhist art has been rightly called the art of the people, glorifying Buddhism in a simple naive manner, free from undue intellectualism and sophistication. In the Yakshis of Bharut (Pls. 4 and 5) and Sanchi (Pl. 7) we find a certain sensuousness that proclaims that the art of the time was more secular than religious. As has already been stated, the Buddha does not appear in his living form, but is only symbolically represented by his footprints, the Bodhi tree, the Wheel of the Law, the Stupa, etc. However, in the representations of the Jataka tales, the Buddha-to-be, the Buddha in his previous incarnations, is freely shown in human form. The art of the Sungas is that of continuous narration. In other words, the whole story is told in a sequence of scenes in which the same characters and objects appear again and again. The lack of perspective is hardly noticeable, the more important figures being represented on a larger scale than those of less importance, wherever they may be placed in the compositional framework.

During the post-Mauryan period, many rock monasteries were also constructed

in the west of the country, and in the central parts of India, apart from those at Bharut (only three railings and a heavy coping are known today), Bodhi Gaya, and Sanchi, all three exemplifying the high artistic achievements of the period. In short, the Sunga era saw the flowering of Buddhist sculpture at these places.

The high stone fences or railings at Bharut (Pls. 4 and 5) surrounded a Stupa presumably enshrining some mortal relics of the Buddha. Today, all that remains of the three Bharut Stupa-railings is in the Indian Museum at Calcutta and has been ascribed to the second century B.C. These sculptures on the Buddhist railings at Bharut are chiefly in bas-relief, representing Yakshas and Yakshis (Pl. 5) and other Nature spirits as well as incidents from the historical life of the Buddha and from the Jataka stories, which are legends of the Buddha's previous incarnations. Animals and floral designs, very well executed, also appear frequently and in abundance. These sculptures pulsate with life and vitality, the decorative floral motifs lending an elegant charm to the figure sculpture. It will bear repetition to point out once again that neither here at Bharut nor even later at Sanchi, is the Buddha represented in person but only symbolically. His footprints, the elephant symbolising his conception, the lotus his birth, the Bodhi tree his Enlightenment, the Wheel emblematic of the Law, the Stupa mound his Parinirvana, the passing away from mortal life. The plastic image of the Buddha was to come into existence at Mathura and as nurtured by the north-western Gandharan school at a later date under the Kushans. As Karl Khandalavala points out, 'the art of these Buddhist railings, in its sculptural representation of flora and fauna, gives a direct lie to the statement which has often been made, that the Indian sculptor was forced into formalism because he could not carve in a naturalistic manner.'

This was the era when the ancient carver in wood was slowly overcoming the technical difficulties of representing his art in the much harder material of stone—learning at the same time through trial and experiment, the greater possibilities of the new medium as well as its limitations. Yet to a very great extent the carving on the stupa-railings of Bharut, as even that of Sanchi, is very reminiscent of the wood-carver's art. It is also possible that Bharut and Sanchi saw the culmination not only of the art of the carvers in wood but also that of the workers in ivory. For instance, at Sanchi it is recorded that a part of the Torana (architrave) was executed by the ivory carvers of Vidisa. It is quite certain that even at this early date there existed guilds of hereditary craftsmen, the ivory carvers definitely forming one of them.

Though dealing primarily with the life of the Buddha, yet it cannot be claimed that this was purely a religious art. The incidents and scenes represented at Bharut and Sanchi are very frequently of a secular nature. Here is a world full of life and

realism, unobsessed by religious or philosophical concepts. In a way, this Buddhist art is a 'social document,' as well as a 'religious story'—free and spontaneous in expression, full of charm, often with an appealing naïveté in the plastic treatment of its motifs.

Sanchi, in Bhopal, is definitely of a later date than the railings of Bharut. The four entrance gateways and their Toranas (architraves) can probably be dated to the middle of the first century B.C., although of course the Stupa itself must be of an earlier date. However, it has been rightly said that 'it is these gateways that are the chief glory of Sanchi.' They were perhaps originally in wood, to be replaced later by the more lasting stone. The art of Sanchi in its bas-relief carving is rather similar to that of Bharut although perhaps a little more sophisticated yet not much superior in the artistic sense. Here is aesthetic appeal allied to exquisite craftsmanship. The gateways of the Great Stupa at Sanchi and the reliefs on them are certainly masterpieces of great beauty though naive and unsophisticated. The bracket figures depicting tree-goddesses have been executed almost in the round (Pl. 7). They exhibit a sensuous grace, a spirited abandon, rendered with a joyful freedom of expression that has hardly been surpassed even in later times.

The quality of rhythm in the Sanchi reliefs is much more noticeable than at Bharut. The art of pictorial narration of the Jatakas and incidents from the life of the Buddha has been carried to a higher peak of perfection. The technique of continuous narration, that is, placing of the different scenes of an incident in the same panel or in sequence, all in the same plane, without bothering much about perspective or the proportionate sizes of the different objects, has been developed to a greater extent than at Bharut. This form of plastic treatment, though unusual and primitive from the Western point of view, has the quiet charm of spontaneity and very easy of understanding for those who knew intimately the incidents thus depicted.

Bodhi Gaya, marking the proverbial site of the Buddha's Enlightenment, rightly falls between Bharut and Sanchi and may be dated between 150 B.C. and the first century B.C. Here there is no Stupa; no relics are enshrined. But the carved railings of the Buddhist sanctuary enclosed the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha achieved Enlightenment and the sacred paths which the Buddha traversed in his meditations later.

Here, too, the sculpture is in relief but carved deeply, with more rounded contours than at Bharut—almost in three-quarter profile. There is a distinct advance here over the art of the latter. The human heads carved within medallions are realistic in treatment and may actually be speaking likenesses of some of the donors of the sanctuary.

## THE KUSHANS

The post-Mauryan period may be said to have come to an end with the rise to power in the North of the kings of the Kushan dynasty, at the beginning of the Christian era. It is not quite certain who the Kushans were, but they probably belonged to certain nomadic tribes of Central Asia, perhaps the Yuch-chi. They came to India some time in the middle of the first century A.D. and uniting under Wima Kadphises became the masters of Bactria and the Indo-Gangetic plain, overthrowing the former Greek rulers. Perhaps the most famous of the Kushan kings was Kanishka who ascended the throne in A.D. 120. At the time the Kushans were establishing themselves in the North, the powerful Andhra dynasty governed many of the areas of the South. The sculptural art of India in the Kushan period may be divided into two groups. Firstly, there was the plastic art of the Gandhara regions in the north-west of the country with its Hellenic art idioms and which has therefore often been termed Graeco-Buddhist. Secondly, there was the indigenous and typically Indian sculpture of the Mathura school that exhibited hardly any Greek or other influence but was purely Indian in conception and execution. The Kushan empire broke up after the death of Vasudeva in A.D. 220.

## GANDHARAN ART

The Gandhara school of the North-West most probably arose at the beginning of the Christian era but reached its highest level of fulfilment in the Kushan period, becoming more and more Indianised as the years rolled by. In the Gandhara regions the Buddha image was created by incorporating in the ideals of a Greek god or Roman Apollo many of the thirty-two physical signs and attributes of the Buddha as specified in the ancient Buddhist texts. But the Gandharan sculptures of the Bodhisattvas and the Buddha remained nothing but slick and superficial representations of the idealized gods of the Greeks—only too human and lacking the spiritual concept emanating from the Buddha of the Mathura school of the Kushan period. As Sir John Marshall has said, 'To the Greeks, man, man's beauty, man's intellect was everything and it was the apotheosis of this beauty and this intellect which still remains the key-note of Hellenistic Art even in the Orient, but these ideals awakened no response in the Indian mind. The vision of the Indian was bounded by the immortal rather than the mortal, by the infinite rather than the finite.' It is quite possible that in the early years of the Graeco-Indian period, the sculptors came from abroad and were probably Bactrians or of Greek descent. Although it has been maintained by some that the Buddha image, as we know it today, originated in the Gandharan regions, there is much that is against this belief. It is however almost certain that the purely Indian form of the Buddha as a Great Yogi, seated cross-legged and deep in meditation, was the creation of the Mathura school—

images very different from those common in Gandharan sculpture and breathing the essentially Indian concept of spirituality. However, Karl Khandalavala feels that 'neither the sculptors of Gandhara nor Mathura were the original creators of the Buddha image. They in all likelihood adapted the local traditions and ideas, and doubtless with greater technical skill, an earlier Buddha type which must have existed prior to the beginning of the Christian era, and which time and archaeological discoveries may yet bring to light.' In this connection, it may be pointed out that even on the seals of Mohenjo-Daro the idea of a figure seated in the Yogi pose of concentration is not unknown.

Technically perfect, superbly finished, the Gandharan sculptures yet lack the breath and life and the divinity of the Buddhas of Mathura. This art is purely Buddhist and a large volume of sculpture exists today in different museums and many private collections, the largest number coming from such sites as Sirkap, the Swat Valley, Takht-i-Bahi, Sahri-Bahlol, etc. Figures in greyish-blue schist and stucco predominate and heads of Bodhisattvas and the Buddha are most common, carved almost in the round, with little supporting background. Most of them are represented with moustaches like the Greek gods with curly or wavy hair and costumed in an un-Indian manner. However, it must not be assumed that all Gandharan sculpture lacks aesthetic sensibilities, for quite a few are known exhibiting a great amount of artistic refinement and sensitivity of approach, but invariably all deeply spiritual qualities are lacking. The drapery is lifelessly modelled, always with the same rigid folds and surface treatment, often destroying the bodily contours of the figure. However, as time went by the Gandhara Buddha image tended to become more Indianized. The face began to radiate a greater amount of spirituality and the drapery lost its stiffness and mechanical precision. Apparently, the Indian influence was beginning to absorb within itself the original Greek ideals of the Graeco-Buddhist school, turning it into what may better be called an Indo-Hellenistic art. Gandhara sculpture continued to be produced in varying quantities, mostly in clay or stucco, till the end of the 5th century A.D. but thereafter the production came to a gradual end, without exerting much direct influence on Indian sculpture as a whole.

It is not quite certain when the true Buddha image as we know it developed, but it must have been some time during the first century A.D. What was the cause of this development? Was there a need for visual imagery, a kind of iconographical concept, much easier to look upon and even worship than abstract symbolism? It is possible that the creation of a figure image of the Buddha may have been influenced by the rapidly growing influence of Brahmanism with its innumerable deities and wide iconography. Secondly, the Gandharan school also must have played an important part in its development.

In the early ages Gandhara was occupied by Greek rulers from Bactria, till they were overthrown by the Sakas or Scythians. They must have brought with them their own artistic ideals and even sculptors, more apt to create images in the Hellenistic style. Hence the toga-like drapery of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas of the Gandharan school. But the grand imagery of the Buddha as a Great Yogi, seated on a lotus seat, is completely indigenous and definitely Indian in its conception. The later 'Indianisation' of the Gandhara Buddha was probably due to the influence of the Sakas who played a unifying role between Greek and Indian cultures.

The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Mathura and Sarnath are purely Indian in their inspiration and sculptural techniques and those of Gandhara seem cold and lifeless in comparison. Whilst the sculptors of the Mathura school used a speckled red sandstone for their figures, those of Gandhara chiefly employed a softer schist of a greyish or greenish colour, appearing psychologically colder to the perception than the warm sandstone of the former school. As Winifred Holmes writes, 'On the whole, the Gandharan school is unsatisfactory from the sculptural point of view, the images and set pieces being often clumsy and stiff or ill-proportioned, or else over-accomplished with a sickly effeminate sweetness' (*An Introduction to Indian Art*). But the present writer is not inclined to agree that Gandharan art is completely devoid of the artistic. As a matter of fact, there is a great deal of worth in these sculptures and it may be presumed that many of the better qualities of Gandharan art were duly absorbed by Indian sculptors of a later date and utilised perhaps in a more refined and idealised idiom.

#### MATHURA SCULPTURE

While Gandhara was producing stucco and stone sculptures in the north-west regions of the country, there arose a great centre of artistic culture and art at Mathura. These sculptures, in reddish sandstone from the quarries of Sikri, achieved a greater claim to artistic greatness than the smooth, vacuous and lifeless mass productions of Gandhara. An allied school also grew up at Sarnath, also within the Mathura influence. This indigenous and purely Indian school of sculpture was a very vital one, producing mostly images of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, carved reliefs and large figures of Yakshas and Yakshis, the dryads or tree-spirits of Indian mythology.

The Mathura Buddha image may be considered to be purely Indian, a great advance in sculptural ideas and techniques over the previous schools, certainly a great advance in conception and execution over the sculptures of the Mauryan period. A freedom of rhythm allied to pure majesty entered into the creation of the Buddha figures and the drapery was sculptured with greater ability so as to

harmonize better with the lines of the body; it was no longer a mere covering as in the Gandharan sculpture but became a part of the figure itself.

Just as the Kushan school produced images of the Buddha, the followers of the Jain creed created a formal image of Mahavira, the founder of their sect, and those Tirthankars who had preceded him. But the Jain style is stiff, unyielding, severe in outline, formal and stereotyped. It has no real interest for the lover of true art and evokes no warmth of feeling in the heart of the beholder. Perhaps the only creation of the Jains that exhibits sound structural qualities and a grand conception is the colossal figure of Gomatesvara, a Jain saint, standing on a hill at Sravana Belgola in Mysore, produced under the influence of the Western Gangas in A.D. 984.

It would be incorrect to come to the conclusion that the output of the Mathura school consisted merely of Buddha and Bodhisattva images. Actually, Mathura sculpture is also known for some very fine relief carving and for the female figures carved on the railings and pillars enclosing Stupas (Pls. 9 and 10). From the artistic point of view these figures are really superb, alluring, sensuous, full of all the charms of femininity. They fully idealise the model type of female beauty as described in the *Brihat Samhita*: full-breasted, round bosomed, with a narrow waist and heavy hips for the support of the girdle; with three folds in the middle, slender long legs, and the neck marked with three lines. Such indeed are the signs of a female who would bring prosperity and joy into the household. As Rene Grousset has so aptly said, 'Never has the poetry of the female form been rendered with a more sensuous power. . . .'

At first, the existence of such female figures, alluring and disturbing to the senses, seems strange on structures belonging to the austere Buddhist faith. However, it has been suggested that these figures, probably dryads or tree-spirits, are symbols of fertility and auspicious by their very nature. They certainly are creations of great allure, like the nymphs of ancient Greece, full of passion, irresistible to mortal man. Could it be that their representation had no quasi-religious basis but that they were the frank creations of the artist thirsting after beauty of form. His sensitive and skilled hands longing to turn his dreams and inner compulsions into visions of loveliness in the permanent material of stone? It has been aptly said that the 'Mathura nymphs are superb examples of linear rhythm achieved not so much by exaggerated curves, like in late mediaeval sculpture, as by the subtle balance in the inflexions of the body' (Karl Khandalavala).

Among the products of the Mathura school are also Yaksha figures and those of Nagas and Naginis and even speaking likenesses of kings. Of the latter the best known is the headless statue of Kanishka, today in the Museum at Lahore. It should be remembered that the Mathura school of the Kushan era also produced

images of Brahmanical and Jain deities and personages together with the Buddhist ones.

Among the most controversial sculptures of this school are what have come to be called Bacchanalian themes. The best known of this is the famous drinking scene which has never been rightly explained (Pl. 11). It apparently depicts a drunk woman kneeling between two male figures who seem to be trying to help her. Very pleasing indeed also are the other female figures shown in different activities of a secular nature. There is, for example, the famous sculpture of the lady with a bird cage, from Bhutesvara (Pl. 10). It has been contended by some authorities that the Bacchanalian as well as the female figures shown in attitudes of great sensuality are not Indian in character. But on careful comparison of the Mathura females with the less alluring feminine figures of Bharut and Sanchi, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the females of Mathura are indeed truly indigenous, and as stated above, fulfil the requirements of the *Bṛihat Samhita* as to the ideals of feminine beauty.

#### THE ANDHRAS

During the rule of the Kushans in the North, the powerful Andhra or Satavahana dynasty dominated the Deccan for nearly four and a half centuries, roughly from 225 B.C. to A.D. 225, their rise dating from the decline of the Mauryas after the death of Asoka in 232 B.C. The Andhras ruled the entire Deccan from the western to the eastern coasts during the height of their power, were prosperous and beneficent. They were Brahmanical Hindus of the orthodox faith, yet they were also patrons of Buddhism and made liberal grants of land and money for the maintenance of Buddhist monasteries and the welfare of the saffron-clad monks.

On the downfall of the Andhras, liberal-minded and patrons of the arts, sometime in the third century A.D., a number of local dynasties came to power in the Deccan, like the Vakatakas of Berar, the Kadambas of the Kanara region and the Gangas of Mysore, an eastern offshoot of which built the temples at Puri and Konarak. The Kadambas were finally subjugated in the middle of the sixth century by the Chalukyas who first appear on the Indian scene round about A.D. 550, with their capital at ancient Vatapi, the modern Badami. The best examples of the art of the Andhra period are to be seen at Karla and Kanheri, both in Western India, and in the rails which surrounded the Stupas at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda (Pl. 13).

The Chaitya cave at Karla probably dates from the first century A.D. (the early Satavahana period) and contains some very noteworthy sculpture. The dampati figures on the front wall of the verandah of the Chaitya illustrated in this work (Pl. 8) probably represent the factual images of the donors of the hall. Although



squat and heavy in physical appearance, they stand with a great amount of dignity. And in spite of the massive plastic treatment of the figures, producing a feeling of great mass and volume, they still appear free and rhythmic in their poise. Theirs is not the grace of a supple body; they are the figures of well-formed men and women and truly representative of the physical ideals of the time and the region.

Karl Khandalavala contends that although these standing figures may be portrayals of the donors of the cave monastery—it was a common custom to depict the donors in the Chaityas endowed by them—it is also possible that 'they possess some semi-religious or ritualistic significance which is not fully understood today, but which was the precursor of the frankly erotic couples of mediaeval art.'

Kanheri caves, about twenty-five miles from the city of Bombay, probably date from the second half of the second century A.D., that is the late Andhra period. Here, too, we find couples sculptured on the verandah walls together with some magnificent Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. However, the colossal Buddha figure in the verandah probably dates from the 6th century A.D. as it seems to bear the influence of the Sarnath school of the Gupta Age. Although Kanheri contains some fine masterpieces of sculptural art, they lack the grand conception and the great technical skill of the inspired creators of Karla.

As said before the Andhras ruled also in the south-east of the country, the best known Stupas of the region being those at Amaravati, the sculptures and the railings dating from the second century A.D. (late Satavahana period), and Nagarjunakonda of approximately the same date, most probably the third century (Ikshvaku period), both in the Krishna-Godavari valley.

The railings of the Amaravati Stupa, which were in marble, no longer exist in situ, but have been removed to different museums, especially in Madras and Calcutta, with some good examples in the British Museum. The carving on the rails is magnificent, depicting incidents from the life of the Buddha and his previous incarnations, forming almost a history in pictures of the customs, manners and mode of life of the time. Here, the Buddha is often represented in human form and not merely symbolically as at Bharut and Sanchi. The figures seem to move with an easy grace and the whole plastic compositions vibrate with life and energy.

The railings and Stupa must have been thirteen to fourteen feet high and about 600 feet in circumference. Elaborately carved, we have here also the usual decorative motifs, half-lotus rosettes, garlands and scenes from the life of the Buddha. Although the sculpture of Amaravati is vibrant with movement, vigorous in treatment, charmingly naive and decorative and sometimes almost sensual, we have however still not reached the stage of sculpture in the full round that was to develop in the following Gupta Age.

Very similar in nature to the above is the sculpture of Nagarjunakonda in the region watered by the Krishna and the Godavari rivers. The human forms here are depicted with a greater fullness than at Amaravati, but the close resemblance between the sculptures at these two sites points definitely to the same artistic heritage. Most naturally depicted are panels representing couples (*dampati*) portraying the wooing and winning of love (Pl. 13). The men and women of Nagarjunakonda have been fashioned with a great freedom of expression as if the sculptor, free from the pressure of representing religious motifs and its restricting injunctions, had just let himself go and enjoyed himself by the carefree expression in stone of many scenes of a domestic nature and of a mild erotic content. Although, as stated above, the men and women of Nagarjunakonda are represented with a greater fullness than those at Amaravati, yet the figures have slenderness allied to grace and dignity. Though amorous, there is nothing obscene or objectionable here—just the human tenderness of man for woman. In spite of the linear characteristics of the figures the massive yet plastic qualities of the sculpture are rather attractive, though the faces invariably lack all expression as if these players in life's drama were eternally withdrawn from all the experiences of the world though very much in it.

#### THE GUPTA AGE

The Gupta period between the years A.D. 320 to 600 has often been called—a little too often!—the Golden Age of Indian art. Perhaps more prominence and importance has been given to it than it rightly deserves. There has been equally great art before and since and everything produced during the Gupta Age is not of equal excellence, neither in conception nor in technique. And now it is admitted by all that the art of the late Gupta period certainly is not outstanding in spite of a brief renaissance.

Chandragupta established his kingdom at Pataliputra in Magadha and thus founded the great Gupta empire. The famous kings of this dynasty ruled for nearly 300 years in the north of India, though after A.D. 500 the great Gupta empire was nothing like what it was before due to foreign invasions.

The Buddha image reached its highest peak of perfection in the period of the Imperial Guptas, both at Mathura and at Sarnath—the final culmination of what the Kushan artists were striving to achieve. Now the infinite calm of Nirvana is envisaged in a human form.

The famous Sultanganj Buddha, now in the Birmingham Art Gallery, is a fine metal casting of the period and shows most of the characteristics of the Buddha images in stone. It has been rightly pointed out that the Sultanganj Buddha does not exhibit the technique of a worker in metal, but that of a sculptor in stone. It would be correct to say that the Gupta artists made the Buddha image internationally

famous, with its calm and contemplative expression, full of an inner spirituality. Perhaps two of the greatest masterpieces of the age are the standing Buddha from Mathura (Pl. 16) and the seated Buddha from Sarnath (Pl. 18). 'Their spiritual majesty creates a lasting impression and their delicate plastic feeling points to the perfection of figure sculpture in that age' (Vasudeva Agrawala). The technical skill of the sculptor had made great progress by this time and had succeeded in producing 'the eternal Buddha dreaming his eternal dream.' There is an artistic sense of refinement and great plastic quality, both allied to a simplicity of treatment, all of which characterise the art of the Guptas. The sculptor of this period was not only skilled but had apparently developed a great sensitivity and understanding of his art, a feeling for the stone he was working on, refining his figures and his compositions. He also developed a greater skill in the delineation of the drapery, making it cling to the body and infusing in it an effect of 'transparency.' This must not lead one to believe that Gupta art was purely Buddhist, for many Brahmanical images were also created, particularly during the later years.

Among the Brahmanical sculptures of the age mention may be made of the sculptures in the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh (Pls. 20, 22 and 23), in the Udayagiri caves and the early temples of Aihole and Badami (Pls. 26, 27, 28 and 29). The Dasavatara temple at Deogarh is architecturally well advanced. The door is delicately carved, with three large sculptural panels on the outside of the other three walls. One tells the story of Gajendramoksha in sculpture (Pl. 20), another represents Nara-Narayana (Pl. 22), while the third is the famous one showing Vishnu reclining on the coils of Anantashesha (Pl. 23). These panels represent the pinnacle of Gupta sculptural art, which succeeds in maintaining a balance between the open sensuousness of the Kushan females and the abstract nature of later art of the early medieval period though the ideals of the Gupta age were primarily austere.

Terracotta and stucco figures were also produced in Gupta times and some excellent finds have been made, as for example, the head of Parvati from Ahi-chhhatra (Pl. 21).

The temples at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal were the creations of the early Chalukyas (c. 6th-7th century). It is said that Chalukyan art was greatly influenced by that of the Guptas and the Pallavas ruling from Kanchipuram. But this is now questioned by some, and even if there has been some such influence, it must have been very slight indeed. The art here is uneven in quality, but some of the sculptures can certainly rank with the best anywhere in the country.

Samudragupta, the son of Chandragupta, the founder of the dynasty, had invaded the southern parts of the country and thus had helped in infusing a certain amount of the Gupta culture in the regions beyond his own kingdom.

The sculptor's art at Kanheri, Aurangabad and Ajanta in the Deccan also shows some influence of the Guptas from the stylistic point of view. Naturally, there are great differences of thought and conception, the sculpture of the Deccan being more massive and heavy, and sometimes lacking in the delicacy exhibited by the figures produced at Mathura and Sarnath. But in spite of the lesser sense of refinement as compared to the northern schools, the Buddhas in stone of the Deccan do exhibit the same profound feeling of spirituality though perhaps in a slightly different and in a more characteristic way.

Turning back to the non-Buddhist sculptures of the time, it would be correct to say that Brahmanical sculpture was produced in considerable volume during the age of the Guptas by which time many new gods had taken the place of the old Vedic deities and the grand conception of a Trinity, composed of the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, had come into being. This was the age of Puranic Hinduism, with its multiplicity of gods and goddesses and the many mythological stories centered around them. This was also the age of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva with their consorts Sarasvati, Laxmi and Parvati, and their many vehicles—Brahma's swan, the Garuda of Vishnu and Siva's bull Nandi. Great as was the art of the Gupta period, it should not be believed for one moment that the previous age had not produced any great Brahmanical sculpture, but the Golden Age did see a profusion that was not perceptible before.

It has already been said that the Gupta period was the Golden Age of Indian art. 'Never, perhaps, was so much importance attached to purity of form and line, to the relationship of masses and the harmony of proportion. Aesthetic treatises were written that defined the canons on which all future rules were based' (Jeannie Auboyer, *The Oriental World*). It was also the period of comparative prosperity, political stability, intellectualism and great literary activity. It was the age when Brahmanic Hinduism was again taking the lead, temples and images of Hindu deities appearing in abundance and sculpture and architecture taking a new path towards perfection; the theories of Indian music and dancing were being formulated; other aspects of literature and diverse other cultural arts were becoming more sophisticated and formal. Sculpture now began to form an integral part of the architecture, although this was not unknown in the preceding periods. The great frescoes of Ajanta were perhaps painted in the Gupta Age. At this place Ananda Coomaraswamy's famous lines will bear repetition:

'Earlier Indian art is, so to speak, a product of Nature, rather than of artifice, and characterized by naturalism and simplicity. Gupta art is a flower of an established tradition, a polished and perfected medium like the Sanskrit language, for the statement of the thought and feeling; and having thus become an ordered language with a grammar and vocabulary of its own, its forms are by hypothesis

conventional ("agreed upon") and ideal—its truth of utterance does not depend upon, though it may include, a visual resemblance to natural forms' (*Introduction to Indian Art*).

Only a passing mention need be made of the important architectural monuments of the Gupta period: the Gupta temple at Sanchi, the brick temple of Bhutargaon, the cave-temples of Udayagiri, the famous Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, sculptures from which are represented here, Nalanda, some of the caves of Ajanta, and many others. So profuse is the greatness of the Gupta art that it is not possible to give in this work even a representative selection of sculpture from the different places and edifices of the period.

#### THE POST-GUPTA PERIOD

It has previously been mentioned that while the Guptas were the paramount power in the North, the Vakatakas, who were related to the former by marriage (one of the Vakatakas having married a daughter of Chandragupta I) were dominant in the Deccan. They were great patrons of the arts including literature and Pravarasena of this dynasty is known as one of the important royal poets of India.

It is said that in the Deccan plastic art reached the pinnacle of perfection during the Vakataka period. We certainly have excellent examples of their work in some of the later caves at Ajanta, the earlier ones at Ellora and those at Aurangabad. As a matter of fact, some of the later caves at Ajanta, which may be dated to the 5th-6th centuries A.D., bear inscriptions which connect them with the Vakatakas. For example, an inscription in Cave No. 16 says that it had been dedicated in the 5th century A.D. to the Buddhist monks by Varadhadeva, a minister of King Harishena. Ajanta is full of many splendid sculptural representations dating from the same period and so are the early caves at Ellora. The caves at Aurangabad, especially Cave No. 7, certainly also belongs to the later part of this period. The best known composition here is the dance panel showing musicians and the chief dancer, all sculptured with superb charm and plastic grace by the Vakataka artist (Pl. 35).

The traditions of the Vakataka dynasty as exemplified in the later caves of Aurangabad continued in the Mahabalipuram sculptures in the South which definitely seem to have been influenced by the art of Ajanta and even by the earlier one of Amaravati. A study of the sculptures clearly indicates that the Vakatakas derived their inspiration and artistic traditions from Amaravati and later from the Satavahanas, although they carried their decorative skills much further than did the sculptors of Amaravati.

The 7th and 8th centuries A.D. may be called the post-Gupta or early medieval period. The remnants of the traditions of the Gupta art trickled into the next two

to three centuries. The Gupta qualities of simplicity and a feeling of calm repose in the Buddha figures now had the added quality of dynamism and increased vitality. Much of the sculpture of this period is Brahmanical in nature and the many aspects of the Puranic gods and goddesses gave the artists greater scope for their artistry. Perhaps the finest masterpieces of this period are to be found at Ellora (Pls. 36, 37 and 38) and Elephanta (Pl. 32). As Karl Khandalavala has said, 'The modelling still adheres to the principles of simplified planes, but it has become more intense, and more conscious of the powerful aspects of the physical body. The spaciousness of the Gupta figure has been replaced to a certain extent by a general attenuation of form and by a broad torso, narrowing towards the waist which assumes in its chiselling a verve and vigour varying with the amount of movement and force to be portrayed.'

By the middle of the 7th century the great Gupta Empire had disintegrated and chaos set in with the death of Harsha of Kanauj. The Chalukyas were masters of the Deccan till they were conquered some time in the middle of the 8th century A.D. by the powerful Rashtrakutas, the greatest king of the line being Krishnaraja I (A.D. 750-800). In the South the Pallavas continued to be the ruling power.

Many caves at Ellora—Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain—are full of the sculpture of the post-Gupta period, although the Jain caves probably date from the later medieval age. The greatest achievement at Ellora, a wonderful architectural feat perhaps unexcelled in the world, is the monolithic cave-cathedral of Kailasanath dating from the later part of the 8th to the early 9th century A.D.—a magnificent creation of Krishnaraja I of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. It has been called 'a storehouse of magnificent sculptures,' carved everywhere the eye can see. Mention must also be made of Siva as Nataraja from Cave No. 21 (Pl. 36), and Cave No. 14 (Pl. 37), as well as the great composition depicting Ravana lifting Mount Kailasa (Pl. 38). In these sculptures one can feel the dynamic power of the great art of the time. The simplicity and serenity of the earlier age, even the plasticity, have now given place to dynamism, movement, and greater compositional values. The Nataraja figures literally seem to move in the whirlwind of the Cosmic Dance. The same strength and power is also to be felt in the sculptures at Elephanta, in the harbour of Bombay, especially noteworthy being the magnificent and world famous composition depicting Maheshamurti (Pl. 32). At Elephanta, as at Ellora, the faces of the figures are in the Deccan idiom—drooping eyelids, brooding expressions, fleshy lips and a certain heaviness of the bodily lines. Sculpture and architecture now form a unified whole, the one counterbalancing the other. The many sculptures were no longer intended as independent pieces of art but as accessories to the whole architectural concept.

Further South, the art of the Pallavas is seen at its best at Mahabalipuram. Here the figures have become slightly elongated and the faces have lost the fullness and heaviness of those of the Deccan. A greater delicacy in delineation has set in, giving a soft charm which may be said to be generally absent at Ellora and Elephanta. The varied compositions, some on a vast scale, show great conceptual skill. The many animal sculptures at Mahabalipuram are delightful and true to Nature in expression and representation. They are perhaps the best to be found anywhere in the country.

It is necessary to make a mention here of the Gurjara-Pratihara period of Indian art of the 8th to the 10th centuries A.D. when there was a great sculptural resurgence under the influence of the Pratihara rulers, whose territory encompassed Gujarat, Rajasthan and areas near and upto Bihar in the east. Some of the finest sculptural specimens of their art come from Kanauj (Pl. 44), Abaneri (Pl. 42), Bikaner, Kotah, etc. The Kalyana Sundara Murti or the marriage of Siva and Parvati illustrated here (Pl. 44) is a wonderful piece of sculpture somewhat alike to the Gupta traditions found at Deogarh. This is undoubtedly a masterpiece of the plastic art though it may lack the fierce vigour and sculptural freedom of similar panels at Elephanta. The group of musicians of Pl. 42, although not as great a masterpiece as Pl. 44, has a great deal of charm and its decorative skill is considerable.

Another excellent piece of sculpture, probably dating from the Gurjara-Pratihara period, is the female figure of Pl. 62 of the 10th century A.D. and today in the Archaeological Museum at Gwalior. However, it is possible that this is a later piece of sculpture belonging to the 11th century A.D.

Turning our attention towards the east, schools of sculpture also flourished in Bengal and Bihar, the most important being the Pala and the Sena schools, chiefly associated with Buddhist images in black carboniferous shale. However, the metal casting art also flourished in this region and many beautiful figures of Bodhisattvas and Taras, with graceful lines, slender limbs and sharp features, were produced here, as well as at Kurkihar (Pls. 45 and 80) in the Gaya district of Bihar. It is from here that the art of metal casting travelled to Nepal and Tibet where many excellent copper-gilt images were made, all with a charm of their own and bearing a typically Nepalese or Tibetan impress (Pl. 97).

The founder of the Pala dynasty was Gopala who established a long and prosperous regime in the eighth century, but the greatest kings of this dynasty were Gopala's son Dharmapala and his grandson Devapala, both ardent patrons of the sculptural arts. Great universities flourished in their time, the best known being the one at Nalanda. The conception of the Buddhist images received a new impetus and these were widely depicted in Bengal and Bihar, though Brahminical figures of gods and goddesses existed side by side. The two most famous and highly skilled

craftsmen of the Pala period were Dhiman and his son Bitpala—equally proficient in painting, sculpture and metal casting.

The Pala and the Sena art that followed it is noteworthy for the feeling of lightness imparted to the figures and the delicacy with which the sculptures seem imbued. The Buddhist sculpture of the period had a definite influence on the Brahmanical sculpture as can be seen in the Hrishikesa form of Vishnu from Sagardighi, shown in Pl. 69. During the later years of the Pala and Sena regime a form of stylisation developed. The garments were incised as wavy lines, the anatomy of the figures became slender and a form of ornateness set in. The Senas succeeded the Palas as the ruling dynasty sometime in the early twelfth century.

In the South, the years of the Pallava and Chola dynasties saw the production of a profusion of sculpture, the Chola period being especially noted for metal casting. The early phase of the Chola stone sculpture is to be seen in the temples built by those who preceded Rajaraja, and even this early art shows a great development especially in the subtle postures of the figures and flexions of the limbs. Besides, there is a freshness about the work which lends to it an additional charm. The figures have now become slender and there is a feeling of restraint throughout. But the Chola art always will be best known for its metal sculpture (Pls. 66, 79, 86, 90 and 91) and especially for its figures of the Nataraja (Pls. 79 and 89).

Just a mention may be made here of the bronze figures found at Akota, near Baroda (Pl 33). Their inspiration is definitely post-Gupta in origin.

#### THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

It has been maintained that the art of Indian sculpture reached its pinnacle of perfection in the Gupta and the immediate post-Gupta period. However, it should not be presumed that no sculpture of a very high quality was created in the centuries that followed. It is true that in the medieval period a great deal of inferior work was produced, lacking in simplicity and the plastic treatment of the earlier age. A sense of over-decoration and elaboration had set in. There was an attempt at a direct appeal to the senses rather than to the mind. There also came a tendency towards superficial elegance and a general drift towards a more naturalistic interpretation of the sculptural motif. However, we are not able to accept Hermann Goetz's sweeping statement that with the setting in of the medieval period, 'The creative phase of Indian art was over, the era of the elaboration of a fixed canon and typology had set in, which continued until its ultimate degeneration into a lifeless mass production of merely iconic or ornamental art'; that Indian art with its previous great ideals of form and beauty 'ended, under different social conditions, as a ready-made professional formula to serve the pomp and luxury of an exclusive



military and priestly aristocracy' (*India: Five Thousand Years of Indian Art*). All the great sculptural art that followed the post-Gupta period may be termed medieval, when sculpture continued to be produced in profusion in all parts of the country. Temples are full of them and so are the different museums both in India and abroad.

An important centre of art developed under the Chandella kings of Bundelkhand and they were the inspiration behind the many temples at Khajuraho that were built during the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. They are well known for the profuse carvings on the walls depicting a variety of subjects from everyday life and the arts and professions the people of the time followed (Pls. 53 to 61). These temples have achieved a great deal of 'notoriety' for their erotic sculpture, breathing a kind of free and passionate sexuality which was absent before. Many explanations have been advanced to rationalise the depiction of carnal scenes on the walls of the Houses of God. Some attempt to explain them on the basis of religion, Tantrism and the far-fetched idea of earthly men and women symbolising the Individual Soul longing to merge with the Universal, the formless Absolute. Many of these theories have been briefly discussed in the author's Introduction to *Konarak, the Sun-Temple of Love*. Shanti Swarup feels that these erotic sculptures, commonly known as mithuna figures, are though 'sensuous imagery,' 'the expression of a highly sophisticated enquiry into sex relations.' However, we are more inclined to believe and admit frankly that the mithuna sculptures at Khajuraho, Konarak and elsewhere in the country are just what they appear to be—free and uninhibited sculptural representations of sexual pleasures in all their forms, mild or violent, normal or devious.

A study of the Chandella art of Khajuraho will show that the sculptural treatment is marked by a great deal of sensitiveness on the part of the artist, in spite of a certain angularity seen in the faces. Yet, the modelling of the body curves tends to emphasize the temptations of the flesh.

A mention may here be made of the beautiful Jain marble temples of Mount Abu in Rajasthan, over-decorated with detailed carvings, the products of skilled craftsmen but not of the true artist. Mount Abu is a city of temples, built of white marble, quarried from the nearby marble mines in the valley and laboriously carried to the top of the hill. The great carved and closely fretted marble, though pretty to look at with its lace-like delicacy, is the work of carvers not artists—of skilled masons scraping away the soft stone rather than using the chiselling technique of the true sculptor, to produce their pretty but inartistic effects. The elaborate ornamental schemes completely nullify whatever little art there may be in the skilled craftsmanship. However, if, as Ananda Coomaraswamy believed, 'superabundance becomes beauty,' then here indeed is beauty. Mention should also be made of the

Surya temple at Modhera in Gujarat. However, little need be said about these as no sculptures from Mount Abu or Modhera have been illustrated in this work. It has been pointed out that the sculptors of the medieval period had turned into highly skilled craftsmen in stone and had, generally speaking, lost their artistic heritage. However, it must be remembered that by this time sculpture was only an accessory to the architecture, a form of decoration superimposed on the architectural framework. No wonder then that the art tended towards a uniform and stereotyped stylistic idiom. Yet, now and then, a true genius created a real work of art that stands out today from the mass of mediocrity generally prevalent. It will bear repetition to say that not all medieval art was poor art.

Perhaps the finest sculptures of the medieval period are to be found in the temples of Bhubaneswar (Pls. 50, 51 and 52) and Konarak (Pls. 81 to 85), both in Orissa and built between the 9th and 13th centuries A.D. At Konarak stands the famous Surya temple or Temple of the Sun, full of mithuna sculpture often of great excellence. Here and at Bhubaneswar, the female figure has reached a high level of sensuousness. As Havell has said, 'the sculptors of Orissa were frankly lovers.' A very subtle and sensuous kind of beauty now pervades the female form. At Konarak are also to be seen the famous figures in the round of musicians standing high up on the roof tiers of the main hall (Pls. 82 and 83). Here also, in the enclosure of the temple, are the colossal monolithic animal figures, carved fully in the round, the war-steed (Pl. 84) and the war-elephant (Pl. 85) being two of the very best. The war-horse exhibits all the sinuous strength and the power and speed of a steed used for the purpose of combat. In the war-elephant we can perceive with our eyes and senses all the bulk and strength, all the ferocity, of a creature trained for destruction by sheer brute force. No wonder these colossi have been considered by many as examples of the finest animal sculpture to be seen anywhere in the world. (For a detailed study of the sculptures at Khajuraho and Konarak, the reader is referred to *Khajuraho* by Vidya Prakash and *Konarak, The Sun-Temple of Love*, with an Introduction by R. J. Mehta.)

While the Chandellas created great temple edifices at Khajuraho and the Eastern Gangas of Kalinga at Konarak and elsewhere in Orissa, towards the South the Hoysalas built magnificent temples, the best being at Somnathpur, Belur (Pls. 72 to 75) and Halebid (Pl. 71), and under whom the style of the Chalukyas reached its climax. These temple structures stand on highly ornate plinths, their inner and outer wall surfaces covered with elaborate and decorative sculptural bas-reliefs and figures almost in the round. The Hoysala art is over-ornate, too decorative and profuse in embellishing every available inch of wall space. Here once again we find the work of skilled craftsmen lacking in true artistic perception, their work considerably simplified by the use of soft chloritic schist which could cut like wax

under the keen edge of the chisel. Here is an art technically perfect, but one that has lost the virtuosity and spontaneity of true greatness. No doubt some of the figure sculptures are very beautiful to look at if one can forget the profuse ornamentation and the detailed carving of the surroundings. The female forms certainly do have a certain languid grace of face and figure though over-heavy, which is truly in keeping with Hoysala art; the male figures are hardly ever worth much notice. It is best to view the sculptures at Somnathpur, Belur and Halebid as a whole as ornamental additions to the architectural complex and not as individual masterpieces of art.

Also allied in treatment is the Chammunda Bull of Pl. 77, from the Chammunda Hill, Hanamkonda, Mysore, dating from the late Chalukyan period. Although the style of sculpture is simple as far as the body of the bull is concerned, the ornamentation is in the typical Hoysala idiom.

#### THE MEDIEVAL SOUTH

In the far South, the Cholas established paramountcy in the 10th century A.D. after the Pallava power had declined. They too, like the Pallavas, were lovers of beauty and true patrons of the arts.

Some of the best examples in stone of the Chola period can be seen in the 11th century temples at Tanjore and Gangaikonda Cholapuram (Pl. 65). These sculptures are expressive and are reminiscent of the famous Chola bronzes which have already been mentioned before. There also seems to be a greater restraint on decoration, the drapery and ornamentation depicted with a degree of simplicity unburdened by unnecessary details.

The Cholas were succeeded by the Pandyas in whose reign the great temple Gopurams of the South were built, though the trend was initiated by the Cholas earlier; but by the end of the 14th century the Vijayanagar kings became a very dominant power in the South, especially during the reign of Krishna Deva Raya—scholar and soldier, patron of literature and the arts—who ascended the throne in A.D. 1509. But unfortunately, by the middle of the century, the Vijayanagar regime and its great glory were to disappear for ever from the annals of history under the fierce onslaughts of the Sultans of the Deccan, that first began with the devastating battle of Talikot, fought on the 23rd of January, 1565.

Vijayanagar art, best represented at Hampi and the Hazara Rama temple, are marked by a greater liveliness than that of the previous period. The figures have grace and good proportions and are enveloped by a subtle charm difficult to describe. But the sculptural art was certainly on the decline. A flamboyant tendency is very apparent. The florid characteristic of Hoysala art seems to have flowered unpleasantly in the temples of the Vijayanagar rulers.

On the collapse of the great Vijayanagar empire, the Nayaks of Madurai and Tanjore founded their dynasty in the 17th century A.D. Their fame rests mostly on the creation of the Meenakshi temple and the sculptures within. The faces of the figures are now rendered with great elegance and refinement, yet they seem to lack humanity and life. Over-decorativeness again shows a tendency to obtrude. The sculptures, like those of Halebid and Belur, really formed part of the architectural scheme and should be studied only in their original settings and not as individual masterpieces of the plastic art (Pls. 94 and 95). This was the period of prolific portrait sculpture. The living likenesses of rulers and kings abound in the halls and corridors of the large temples with their profusion of decorative pillars. Queens and those of lesser rank are not absent, often depicted with hands folded in the typically Indian gesture of adoration, presumably of the deities of the temples they had helped to create.

Nayak art is not devoid of a sense of vitality, but it is circumscribed due to the constant use of a stylistic idiom that is sometimes apt to verge almost on the grotesque. There is no doubt of the technical ability of the Nayak sculptor—his prolific output clearly testifies to his mastery of the chisel.

Under the Nayaks temple architecture reached its last phase in the South. The temple increased in size but not in architectural beauty. The flamboyant pillared halls and corridors may inspire the uninitiated with awe, but slightly disgust the true connoisseur of artistic beauty. No one replaced the Nayaks as patrons of art. There was no one to build huge monuments, even florid ones with a touch of the Baroque about them. The flame of Indian plastic art was dying out after its few feeble flickers at survival.

#### RECAPITULATION

The above traces very briefly the history of Indian sculpture through the ages. To recapitulate, during the Mauryan and Sunga periods the sculptor was a true observer of Nature and succeeded in portraying with perfection the animal and plant world all around him and in depicting the realities of day to day life. They sculptured their female figures as they liked them, full and rounded.

The sculptural qualities of the Maurya and Sunga periods may be said to have continued into the Kushan art of Mathura which followed. Here too we find human figures fully formed and roundly contoured, the females especially enveloped in an aura of idealised femininity. The naturalism of the period that preceded continued for some time later, but the figures, especially at Amaravati and other places in south-eastern India, began to become elongated and more and more formalised into a stiff idealism. There however developed a greater vitality in the composition, a greater homogeneity of the different elements, a better arrangement of the motifs;

but even in the more ascetic art of Amaravati, the female figures continued to provoke a sense of restless sexuality, though in a milder degree.

At about this time, in the north-western regions of the country, a more foreign style was developing at Gandhara. The Gandharan artists were the first to depict the Buddha in the human form, albeit more in the form of a Greek god or a Roman emperor. Happily, this Greek-inspired conception of the Buddha was quickly assimilated and Indianized in other parts of the sub-continent.

The Gupta Age of the 4th to the 6th century tended to exhibit an idealism absent before, especially in the creation of the Buddha image. The drapery became increasingly more and more 'transparent,' its folds enveloping the figure of the Great Teacher more and more closely, and falling into greater semi-concentric curves. But in spite of a certain amount of stiffness of the figure, its calm majesty remained, vibrant with a sensitive modelling of the body. The decorated halo became common behind the serene face and the features tended to exude warmth and feeling.

The early medieval period following on the Gupta Age is one of profuse and elaborate production, the themes of the sculptures varying widely, based on the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain mythologies. Various legends from the Puranas became common themes of the sculptural compositions. By this time the artist-craftsman had not only inherited a long tradition of manual skill, but many of the art idioms had been formalised and codified. The art now could be called a Brahmanic one, the Buddhist faith being on the decline in the country of its birth.

The sculpture of the post-Gupta period is forceful, dramatic and full of movement—much more so than that of the preceding period. The serenity of the Gupta Age was giving place to greater dynamism, even a sense of sensuality in the human figures.

Some of the greatest monuments of the post-Gupta period are to be seen at Elephanta, Ellora and Mahabalipuram. At Ellora, perhaps the greatest is the Kailasanath, both as a feat of great architectural achievement and for its dynamic sculpture. One of the most famous of the compositions here is the one representing Ravana trying to lift Mount Kailasa (Pl. 38). The expression on the faces of Parvati and her female attendants, an expression denoting fear at the trembling of Mount Kailasa, has been handled with great subtlety. In contrast is the calm look on the face of Siva, who quietly presses Ravana down just by the pressure of his big toe. The compositions depicting Siva as Nataraja, from other caves of Ellora, as illustrated here in Plates 36 and 37, are really praiseworthy. As already said the caves at Elephanta also contain some masterly sculpture, the greatest and finest, and naturally the best known, being the colossal 'Trimurti' (Pl. 32). In the South, some of the best sculpture of the period is to be found at Mahabalipuram, developed

under the influence of the Pallavas. The gigantic sculptural composition at Mahabalipuram, covering a rock area nearly 96'×43', representing the 'Descent of the Ganges,' is rightly considered one of the greatest masterpieces of sculptural art in the South.

The later years of the medieval period saw the construction of the famous temples at Khajuraho, Bhubaneswar, Konarak and Puri, all more or less in the northern style of architecture with curvilinear *sikharas*, topped by an *amalaka*. Nothing much of any importance seems to have been produced elsewhere at this date. Mathura, Nalanda and Sarnath had lost their importance as sites of sculptural greatness. However, artistic activity, especially in the fields of architecture, did continue in other parts of the country, in the northern, western and central regions of India. The florid art of the Hoysalas has already been noted. Under them, decorative details and profuse ornamentation took the place of true art. Yet, one cannot help feeling a certain attraction for the infinitely varied embellishments to be found at Halebid and Belur. Though the figures are profusely garbed and heavily ornamented, no amount of skilled craftsmanship can hide the lack of true artistic inspiration. The figures lack life and animation in spite of their varied bends and postures and the artist's attempts to give them an impression of movement. The famous temples at Khajuraho and Bhubaneswar and the Temple of the Sun at Konarak have achieved a certain amount of adverse publicity for the *mithuna* or erotic sculptures found on their walls. It has been said that such sculptures are detailed and pictorial illustrations of the *Kama Shastras*. But these *mithuna* sculptures are not representative of the high quality of art prevailing generally at these places. For example, the most superb sculptures at Konarak are those of the musicians in the round, standing on the roof tiers, and the colossal horses, elephants and other beasts scattered in the temple precincts, not the *mithunas*. Some of the best sculptural representations at these places have been rightly judged as masterpieces of Indian medieval art.

A passing reference has already been made to the group of Jain temples at Mount Abu, and the temple complexes at Girnar and Palitana. However, Jain art cannot be considered to have reached any degree of artistic perfection, though its skilled craftsmanship and its detailed ornamentation have a certain charm of their own and can attract the uninitiated by the minuteness of the carving and the lavish profusion. The use of marble facilitated finicky carving as the unyielding surface of harder stone cannot. The softness of marble perhaps influenced the craftsmen to work in the style really more suitable for use with ivory or wood. Here is the art of the carver, not of the sculptor. During the later medieval age, the sculptural art under the Pallavas of the South, who could be called the true heirs of the Guptas in the cultural sense, retained to a certain extent the fine qualities

of the art of the previous age and imbued their work with verve and dynamism. But deterioration set in with the Pandyas, to become increasingly worse under the Vijayanagar and Nayak rulers. In the meanwhile, Buddhist art was restricted to the north-east corner of the country, that is, chiefly in Bengal and Bihar under the Pala and the Sena dynasties. A distinct school developed here following on the work of Dhiman and his son Bitpala who lived in the 9th century A.D. during the reign of Devapala. This Eastern school greatly influenced the metal casting art of Nepal and Tibet. Under the Palas and their successors the Senas, it turned into an art of the virtuosi rather than that of a true creative artist. Slowly degeneration set in and Buddhist art was no longer produced in any great quantity or of recognisable quality in this corner of the country after the start of the 13th century.

#### THE HUMAN FORM IN INDIAN ART

The plasticity of Indian sculpture is one of its most noteworthy features for this is the chief creative idiom through which the artist expresses himself. As Stella Kramrisch so aptly puts it, 'The figures of Indian sculpture are plastic vessels filled with a potent continuum in recognisable bodily forms.' The volume of the figure and the planes of its surface are rendered so as to define life, fill the body with the very essence of living. The Indian artist has always relied as much on memory and conceptual idealism as on direct observation of Nature for the creation of his art. To the Indian sculptor, the outward form, the tactile surface qualities, seem more important than what may lie beneath. His figures are not bones and muscles covered over with soft flesh, but yielding warm flesh itself, unsupported by any bony framework, the flesh rendered solid enough to play the same supporting role. As Stella Kramrisch points out, in the case of female figures, the greatest plasticity, its greatest impact, lies within the region between the breasts and the hips. Whatever the posture of the body, the sphericity of the breasts remains unforeshortened. They symbolise her sex, her maternity, motherhood, fertility, her place in the world as the vehicle of procreation and nurture. In the male figures too, the chest is the most dominantly sculptured. Therein lies all manliness. The shoulders are widely spaced, the arms powerful, the hips firm and muscular.

Another point that often passes unnoticed is that there are hardly any true concavities in Indian plastic figural art, except in rare cases like the images of the fasting Buddha. What may appear like depressions, clefts or narrow sunk areas can easily be construed as the meeting places of two convex surfaces, as they truly are. Any cleavage is just a line or area between two convexities. Herein Indian plastic art differs from that of the West in which the faithful delineation of anatomo-

mical details, the correct rendering of bones and muscles, play an important part, and concavities appear where their presence seems anatomically necessary or correct. To the artist of India's past, the inner life of the soul was always more important than the outer form. He believed that the true purpose of art lay in the representation of the inner reality, not the outward physical appearance. The saint and the sinner may have the same anatomy, the same structure of bones, sinews and tendons, flesh and skin, yet they are not the same in any other sense and it was thus essential for the Indian artist to bring out this difference, the inner truth of the soul within. This in spite of his deep understanding of anatomical details and bodily structure. Indian artists were not ignorant of human and animal anatomy as Susruta, as long ago as 700 B.C., had already written on this subject, basing his text on actual dissection and personal observation. Although the Indian artist often went to Nature for his inspiration, he only expressed it through the medium of his own inner vision, his spiritual experiences and artistic intuition. He depicted not what he actually saw, but what he felt ought to be.

#### BACKGROUND OF INDIAN ART

'Indian art is the expression of a world of thought and feeling very different from the European,' writes Winifred Holmes. 'Nowhere has European art attempted to portray the same kind of relationship between God and man as there is in Indian sculpture. So there are no familiar spiritual patterns to look for in coming to terms for the first time with the art of Hindu and Buddhist India' (*An Introduction to Indian Art*).

It cannot be said with any certainty when the art of India is supposed to have originated. It seems to have suddenly sprung into activity in a fairly developed state between the 3rd and 2nd millennium, seemingly appearing almost out of no immediate past. The art objects discovered at the sites of the Indus Valley Civilization as well as the later terracottas found at Pataliputra and attributable to the 4th century B.C. already show an advanced phase of modelling and sculpture, as if they were prototypes of the art to come.

The sculptural masterpieces of India provide the most suitable material for the study of her art, more than her architecture, great as it has been in the past. How rightly it has been said that the best way of understanding and appreciating India's great culture of the past ages is through her sculpture—'permanent records of an artistic achievement that is at once sensual, lyrical, and steeped in the compassionate and mystic influence of the great Indian religions.' Even if the art of India was primarily a religious art, there are few signs of it in the productions of the early schools when the artist-sculptor seems to have preferred to depict secular subjects, apart from the incidents in the life of the founder of the Buddhist faith.



He seems to have glorified in precise detail, faithfully reproducing the figures and objects of private and domestic life of the time. He seems to have delighted in representing the human body, whether dynamic or sensuous, male or female, in all its manifold activities. The gods of Brahmanic Hinduism looked, lived and behaved like mortals, with their graces and foibles, though they may not exactly resemble humans. Siva generally has four hands, and Durga may have eight, according to prescribed formulas. But both have a human appearance if not quite a human form. As H. G. Rawlinson has expressed it, 'He has a wife and children. every morning he is awakened by hymns sung by attendant Brahmins and dancing girls. He is bathed, anointed, dressed in costly robes and taken out in a palanquin or chariot. Offerings of flowers, fruit, coconuts and betel are laid at his feet, and incense is burnt and lights waved before him' (*India: A Short Cultural History*). After all, in the Indian mind there is little distinction between the sacred and the profane and this was especially so in the early periods of India's history.

During the many centuries that followed, artistic development continued with a greater and still greater mastery over the technique of the sculptural and the conceptual details. With the great proficiency of the artist came a greater degree of sophistication of the art idioms. The compositions tended to become crowded, the wealth of detail to increase and a sense of decorativeness began to obtrude. The human figure now began to play an increasingly important role in the sculptural complexes. The stone carvings were often coloured with tempera, thus lessening the difference between the arts of sculpture and mural painting. For it must not be forgotten that the majority of the sculptures existing in situ were probably polychromed when first created.

The art of India has a very definite individuality which is difficult for the West to understand or appreciate. In the past it was truly naturalistic, showing Nature in an idealised and even stylistic idiom. Disability and old age were hardly ever depicted as unsuitable subjects for the sculptor's art. India's gods and heroes are always young, strong and handsome; her goddesses and heroines are warm in the true sense of the word, exhibiting the charm and richness of everlasting and matured youth. Her Yakshis and dryads may have been conceived as semi-divine beings, but they were depicted in the most alluring and sensuous forms. Referring to the naturalism of Indian art, it is but reasonable that the Indian artist should be greatly engrossed in the representation also of animal forms, a phase of art in which he achieved as great a mastery in the past as he had done in the case of the human form.

Is the sculptural art of India simple in conception? The very simplicity of its appearance clothes the creative complexity of idealised, aesthetic principles. Beneath the outward form lies tradition, symbolism, sentiments and feelings so truly

Indian. Art came to have its special laws and the artist rarely dared to break the canons of his professional code.

Little need be said here of the status of the artist and the craftsman in ancient and medieval India. There is no doubt that the painters and the sculptors had their own guilds and must have been regarded as in a class by themselves, within the social hierarchy of the time. It is a moot point whether the artists worked as individuals or as members of a team or a guild. However, even if participation in team-work was the rule, it was probably supervised by the master-craftsman or chief artist or even the priest-architect. There can be no doubt that there were individual artists with great creative genius, who must have worked on their own and thus produced some of the great masterpieces that the world has now come to recognise, understand and enjoy.

It has been said that there is a quality of nobility in the art of India that has been derived from the sacred duty to reflect a world composed harmoniously of animals, men and women alike, the whole cosmic universe. This must have made the painter, the sculptor and the architect to feel that he had a mission in life and towards that end he must have spent many years of his life in mastering the technical requirements and the background necessary for his art. It is known that no work of art was ever begun before the performance of a sacred ritual and no work was ever considered finished till the priest had performed the necessary consecrational rites, especially in the case of religious edifices or the images to be enshrined within. The personality and individuality of the architect or the sculptor was of no account, and hence the complete anonymity of Indian art. It was the creative product that mattered, not the creator. He was only an instrument of his artistic creation. Today we know of very few artists of early and even medieval India by name and the few names that we do know have come down to us only by tradition. Just a very few pieces of art have actually been signed or dated with the names of their creators. India's art is truly 'art for art's sake.' The artist was happy and satisfied if he had produced something to be proud of, exalting in the creation of his work alone.

On the whole, Buddhist art was of a more reposeful, poised and gentler form than the later highly dynamic, vibrant, tense, and often extravagantly conceived, styles of Hindu Brahmanism. During the Gupta and even during the post-Gupta ages, the Buddhist and the Brahmanic seem to have co-existed side by side, the latter gaining ascendancy with the decline of the Buddhist faith. The wider cosmology and the mythological traditions of Brahmanic India were better suited to the dynamic and forceful characteristics inherent in the art of the later period, as seen at Ellora, Elephanta, Mahabalipuram and many other places. But the narrative qualities of the previous period continued a little longer. Even Brahminic

Hindu sculptural compositions preferred to tell a story, explain a detail, exemplify a legend. Side by side there developed a taste for the bigger and bigger, for the colossi that provided the sculptor with a vaster surface area and permitted a greater freedom to infuse dynamic vitality and movement in his compositions. However, even in the predominantly Buddhist age, the colossal was not quite unknown. But there is a feeling of awe, majesty, force and movement in the Brahmanical compositions which are definitely absent from the serene, even though large, figures of the Buddha and Buddhist art in general. The Hindu gods are mostly stern, unyielding and awesome; the Buddha everlastingly gentle, at peace with the world. The diagonals tended to dominate in Brahmanical art, which according to the laws of pictorial composition, tend to favour movement and direction. Even in the more static compositions like that of Vishnu sleeping on the coils of Anantashesha, symbolising the process of eternity (Pl 26), there is still an underlying restlessness that seems to break through the surface at times. There is also the Nataraja, Siva as the Lord of the Dance, in the frenzied Tandava or the Nadanta of the South where there is movement and excitement even in the frozen stance. The Hindu artist of the predominantly Brahmanical age certainly succeeded in imbuing his masterly compositions with a grandeur of cosmic conception that was absent before, though it tended to degenerate in the later medieval age. No wonder that the greatness of India's art diffused to countries of the Far East, where a hybrid style developed reminiscent of its ancestry. No wonder the art of India has spread far beyond its shores and fused its own original concepts with those of the lands where it chose to dwell. Indian art has been called 'a mirror of Indian civilization,' and so it has always been.

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'Each nation has a particular genius of its own, and therefore a particular way of self-expression,' says S. N. Dasgupta. 'The Indian mind expressed its feelings of beauty in a way which suited the temperament and ideals of its people. They had always valued spiritual concepts and love of nature more than anything else. So we find in the apperception and creation of the beautiful, nature plays an important role. . . the inner dominant character overflows the created forms' (*Fundamentals of Indian Art*). And in the hundred plates that follow, representing the cream of Indian plastic art over a wide canvas of time, stretching from the dim ages of the third millennium B.C. to the recent past, the perceptive reader will feel and find the Indian artist's inner apperception of beauty, his unique mode of self-expression, the last often hampered by the binding laws of the *Shastras*. But now and then, the bonds have been broken, the spirit has soared, imagination and free will have conquered the limitations of ancient dictates and idealised form. And then and there has emerged a truly great work of art.

# TOURIST INFORMATION

Many of the masterpieces illustrated here are today in museums in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Mathura, Patna, Gwalior and other places, and no tourist is likely to visit them just for the purpose of studying the originals here reproduced. Perhaps the only exception is the National Museum in New Delhi which is really worth a visit even during a short stay in the Capital, for it is full of archaeological finds, specimens of ancient sculpture, miniature paintings and Central Asian antiquities.

However, much of the sculptural art of India is in situ and the many sites where it is to be found certainly deserve a visit. The following brief items of information may help the tourist to decide on what to see and what to skip in the time at his disposal. Further and fuller details can be obtained from the Government Tourist Bureaus that are now established in most of the important cities of India. Travel agencies may also be contacted for railway or air bookings, hotel reservations and detailed itineraries.

## AJANTA, ELLORA AND AURANGABAD

The best centre from where to visit the famous caves at Ajanta, Ellora, and Aurangabad is Aurangabad itself, 375 km (233 miles) by rail from Bombay or 404 km (251 miles) by road. The respective distances from Delhi are 1394 km (866 miles) by rail and 1331 km (827 miles) by road. Air services are also frequent on the Indian Airlines routes.

Western and Indian style hotel accommodation is available at Aurangabad and also transportation in the form of taxis and buses for visiting the caves.

The Ajanta caves are situated about 106 km (66 miles) from Aurangabad. They can also be approached from Jalgaon from which they are only 60 km (37 miles) away. However, accommodation and travel facilities are not adequate at Jalgaon though there is a Travellers' Bungalow which can be occupied by permission of the Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Jalgaon.

There are thirty caves at Ajanta, excavated in a steep escarpment about 76 m (250 feet) high, the area covered being about half a kilometre. The best frescoes are to be found in Cave Nos. 1, 2, 16, 17 and 19, and the finest sculptures in Cave Nos. 1, 4, 17, 19, 24 and 26. Cave Nos. 1, 2, 16 and 17 are fitted with spotlights which are switched on for a fee payable at the site.

The Ellora caves are situated about 29 km (18 miles) from Aurangabad and taxis and buses are available for a visit to them. The road to the caves passes by the ancient fort of Daulatabad (Devagin) and an effort should be made to see it.

At Ellora there are caves belonging to the Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain faiths. Cave Nos. 1 to 12 are Buddhist, the next sixteen are Brahmanical, while Nos. 30 to 34 belong to the Jain group.

Photography at the Ajanta and Ellora caves is allowed with still cameras, without the use of stands or artificial light. Nowadays electronic flash is permitted. Trained guides are available and for their services, the Special Officer of the Archaeological Survey of India at the two sites should be contacted.

The caves at Aurangabad are worth a visit, even a brief one, and in spite of the fact that this involves a fairly steep climb and the caves lie scattered over a distance of 2 km. across the hillside. Those particularly worth seeing are Cave Nos. 1, 2, 3, and especially No. 7 which contains the famous dance panel illustrated in this book.

For all information and guidance, the Government of India Tourist Office, Station Road, Aurangabad, should be contacted.

#### ELEPHANTA (GHARAPURI)

The famous caves are excavated in the hillside on the small island of Elephanta, locally known as Gharapuri, in the harbour of Bombay, about 10 km (6 miles) from the city itself. There are regular launch services and bunder-boats can also be hired for the trip. The caves are about a quarter of a mile from the landing place and nearly 76 m (250 feet) above sea-level and are approached by a series of easy steps. A small entrance fee is levied.

Only the Great Cave No. 1 is full of sculpture and really is the only one worth seeing. If possible, the visit should be made on a week-day as on holidays and on week-ends, the small island is crowded with picknickers—hardly the right atmosphere for a careful study of the many magnificent sculptural panels in the Great Cave.

#### ANCIENT TEMPLES AT DEOGARH

By rail, Jakhlaun station is about 1023.5 km (636 miles) from Bombay. A rough unmetalled road, 19 km (12 miles) in length, leads from it to Deogarh. On a bluff overlooking the Betwa river are the ruins of temples dating from the Gupta age. There are some fine sculptures here, especially on the walls of the Dasavatara temple. Three panels are illustrated in this book.

#### AIHOLE, BADAMI AND PATTADAKAL

The early train from Bijapur in Mysore State stops at Bagalkot from where a visit can be made to the temple sites at Ahole, Badami and Pattadakal by car,

all in one day. Here the Chalukyan art is seen in its evolutionary stages and the profuse sculpture is of a high order.

There is an Inspection Bungalow near Badami which can be occupied by tourists by prior permission of the Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Bijapur.

Full particulars and train timings can be obtained from Travel Agencies or the Government Information Bureaus.

#### THE BUDDHIST CHAITYA AT KARLA

The Karla or Karli Chaitya cave is situated on the Western Ghats and is best visited from Lonavla on the Bombay-Poona road, about 119 km (74 miles) from Bombay City by road. The cave is about 12 km (7½ miles) from Lonavla and the foot of the hill on which the Chaitya cave has been excavated is accessible by car. The ascent to the cave is nearly 122 m (400 feet) by a fairly good path with a comfortably easy gradient.

From Lonavla, a visit can also be paid to Bhaja and Bedsa caves, roughly the same distance away in another direction.

Second class hotel accommodation is available at Lonavla as well as transport. For better facilities of this nature, the site of departure for the caves could be Poona, about 40 km (25 miles) from Lonavla.

#### THE SANCHI STUPAS

Roughly 805 km (500 miles) from Bombay lies Sanchi in the original native State of Bhopal and is most conveniently visited by car from the city of Bhopal. There is a State Resthouse here which can be occupied by permission of the Director of Archaeology, Bhopal. Arrangements however should be made to carry food as none may be available at the site itself.

The Great Stupa is situated on a level area about 107 m (350 feet) above the plain. Of the other monuments worth seeing are the shattered pillar of Asoka by the southern gateway, the Chaitya hall (Temple No. 18) standing opposite the southern entrance to the Great Stupa, the Gupta temple No. 17, almost recalling to mind the classic temples of ancient Greece, and Stupa No. 3.

#### THE TEMPLES AT KHAJURAHO

At present there are about thirty temples within a radius of a few kilometres at Khajuraho, a small village in the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh. It is situated about 29 km (18 miles) south-east of Chhatarpur and about 55 km (34 miles) south of Mahoba on the main road running between Sagar and Hamirpur. Nowadays, there are regular air trips to Khajuraho from Delhi. About a night's journey from Delhi by rail is Jhansi. A further journey of three hours by another train takes the visitor to Harpalpur. Buses are available here as well

as jeeps and station-wagons. Booking for the latter should be done in advance. Khajuraho is another 98 km (61 miles) further by road from Harpalpur, a journey taking about four hours. By car, the latter is roughly 595.5 km (370 miles) from Delhi. This trip is tedious and advantage should be taken of the air shuttle service taking visitors to the temple site. The nearest air-field is at Panna, about 51.5 km (32 miles) from Khajuraho village.

There is a good Circuit Bungalow at Khajuraho, but otherwise accommodation is limited and transport is not available except for a few tongas. The temples have to be visited on foot, over dusty and uneven roads. There is also a Circuit House at Panna as well as one at Chhatarpur.

The morning should be spent in visiting the western group of temples. The eastern and southern groups may be reserved for the afternoon of the same day. When only a half-day trip is possible (by plane), the tourist is advised to visit the western group as well as the Ghantai, the Parsvanatha and the Duladeva temples. Apart from these three, the best are the Kandariya Mahadeva, the Laksamanatha and the Vishwanatha temples.

#### THE TEMPLES AT BHUBANESWAR

Bhubaneswar is in Orissa State and is its new capital—about 438 km (272 miles) by rail from Calcutta, from where it can be reached by rail or air. It has air services on the Madras-Calcutta route, the distance from Calcutta by air being 385 km (240 miles). To see all the temples involves a walk of three to four hours.

From Bhubaneswar the Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves can also be visited and then a trip made to Puri to see the famous temple of Jagannath. Puri is 499 km (310 miles) by rail from Calcutta and 62 km (39 miles) from Bhubaneswar. Hotel accommodation is available. There are also Rest Houses and a Tourist Bungalow.

There is a large number of temples at Bhubaneswar, mostly in decay. On a short trip, a visit should be paid to the Great Lingaraj temple and the Rajarani, the Muktesvara and the Parasuramesvara temples.

De luxe cars and station-wagons are available. For these, the Tourist Information Bureau, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, should be contacted. Buses and cycle-rickshaws are also available if a cheap mode of travel is desired. Accommodation is not difficult in the hostels and clubs, rest houses, Tourist Bungalows, Circuit House, etc. A list of approved guides is available at the State Tourist Information Bureau.

#### THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN AT KONARAK

The Sun-temple at Konarak lies in a rather isolated and desolate situation in the State of Orissa, not far from Puri. From January to June, the roads are fair

enough for a car to approach close to it, by way of Pipli on the Cuttack Road and Gop. There is a P.W.D. Bungalow here, but permission for its use is required from the Executive Engineer, South Division, Cuttack. A Tourist Bungalow can also be rented or accommodation may be secured in Rest Houses.

The Temple of the Sun stands at a distance of about 66 km (41 miles) by road, south-east of Bhubaneswar, which can be reached by air from Calcutta. There is a small landing strip near the temple which is just large enough to accommodate small three-seater planes. The tourist may be able to charter one from the Orissa Flying Club, if sufficiently long notice is given. But planes are not always available and should not be depended on for transport to the temple site.

Regular bus services now run from both Bhubaneswar and Puri (85 km or 53 miles) from the middle of November to Mid-June. Private cars can also be hired for the journey. As hardly any food is available at Konarak itself, provision should be made to carry sufficient for the round trip.

#### HALEBID AND BELLUR (MYSORE STATE)

Banavar station stands roughly 826 km (513 miles) from Poona, which itself is about 160 km (100 miles) from Bombay. The Kedaresvara and Hoysalesvara temples at Halebid lie 29 km (18 miles) south-west from here by road and 16 km (10 miles) further on in the same direction is Belur where stands the Chenna Kesava temple. Motor-bus services are available. Cars are also available for hire at Hassan, which is the nearest railway station from Belur—38.5 km (24 miles)—and 13 km (8 miles) further on is Halebid.

A Traveller's Bungalow (2nd Class) is available at Belur and permission for its occupation may be secured from the Assistant Engineer, P.W.D., Belur Sub-division. At Halebid also there is a Traveller's Bungalow (1st Class) which can be used by arrangement with the Supervisor, P.W.D., Halebid Division, Hassan.

The journey can be continued to Sravana Belgola where stands the gigantic statue of Gomatesvara, almost 21.3 m (70 feet) high, facing north, and reached by a steep flight of steps.

#### THE SOUTH

If a trip is planned South, opportunity should be taken to visit the many famous temples dotted all over. All attempts should be made to visit at least Mahabalipuram, Vellore, Kumbakonam, Tanjore, Chidambaram and Madurai. Any Tourist Agency will gladly plan the whole trip, which cannot be done in a hurry.



All reservations should be made in advance. But the temple sites are mostly easy of access, if not exactly in or close to the cities themselves.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is always better to plan out the whole itinerary in advance with the help of a friendly tourist agent—there are many reliable Tourist Agencies in all the large cities—and the Government Tourist Centres. It is always advisable to book hotel reservation before the start of the trip or make arrangements for accommodation in Government Rest Houses, Dak or Travellers' Bungalow, where such are available. Some of them are quite good and cheaper than hotels. Transport facilities are also not always easily available and so, if possible, arrangements should be made in advance. A good, reliable and enthusiastic travel agent can do much to make the trip—long or short—easy, comfortable and enjoyable

# NOTES ON THE PLATES

*The photographs of masterpieces of Indian sculpture that follow are copyright by the Archaeological Survey of India and are reproduced here by courtesy*

**Pl. 1. Bull Seal** From Mohenjo-Daro C 2500-1700 B.C. Steatite. 3.8 x 3.8 cms. sq. National Museum, New Delhi

The humped bull is a common motif. The Indus Valley Civilization script, seen on the seal, has so far not been deciphered. The engraving of the bull is of a very high order and exhibits advanced craftsmanship. Could this be the origin of Siva's Nandi of Brahmanical times?

**Pl. 2. Dancing Girl** From Mohenjo-Daro C 2500-1700 B.C. Bronze. Height, 9 cms. National Museum, New Delhi

This is one of the most important finds at the Mohenjo-Daro site. The figure is generally identified as a dancing girl, but this is a matter of conjecture. Even if she is 'a ritual dancer, cast in bronze, for a ritualistic purpose, it has a sensitivity which entitles it to be considered as a genuine work of art,' says Karl Khandalavala. He further states, 'though in a sense primitive it is a work of great beauty particularly in its graceful lines and the rhythmic movement suggested by its virile limbs.'

**Pl. 3. Bull of an Asokan Pillar** From Rampurva, Bihar. Mauryan period, 3rd cent B.C. (c. 244 B.C.) Polished sandstone. Height, 203 cms. National Museum, New Delhi

This capital originally topped an Asokan pillar. It is in three parts: 1, a bell-shaped lotus with petals hanging downwards; 2, a circular plinth with floral motifs; and 3, a humped bull at the top, almost in the round. The bull is in the traditional Indian idiom, full of vigour and muscular power. The artist has succeeded in imparting to it an illusion of great bodily strength, restrained but dynamic. Palmette and rosette reliefs on the abacus and the inverted bell-shaped lotus suggest

a West Asian influence. About this sculpture, Sir John Marshall wrote: 'The finest carving indeed that India has yet produced, and unsurpassed, I venture to think, by anything of their kind in the ancient world.'

**Pl. 4. Part of Stupa Railing** From Bharut. Sunga period, middle of the 2nd cent B.C. Red sandstone. Height, 212 cms. Indian Museum, Calcutta

Yakshi Chulakoka Devata on the right vertical of the railing. Her 'embrace' of the tree identifies her as a tree-goddess. The sculpture exhibits all the uninhibited vigour of early Indian art, a foretaste of the voluptuousness of the female forms of Mathura sculpture (Kushan period).

**Pl. 5. Yakshi Chandra** From Bharut. Sunga period, 2nd cent B.C. Stone. Height, 215 cms. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

By this time, the carving of the costume and jewellery had become stylised, as were also the physical aspects of the body: full rounded breasts, a very slim waist swelling out into wide and heavy hips, long, slender legs. These characteristics became the model for the future schools of sculpture. The figure's close association with the tree behind, the upraised right hand clasping a branch, identifies her as a Yakshi or spirit of the tree, perhaps associated with fertility and procreation.

**Pl. 6. Yakshi Chauri-bearer** From Didarganj, Patna. C. 1st-2nd cent B.C. Polished sandstone. Height, 160 cms., 204 cms. with pedestal. Patna Museum.

This attractive figure, holding a fly-whisk, has now been identified as a Yakshi or female tree-spirit. It is a superb piece of work, full of spirit, and a sensuous quality hard to define. She

probably stands for the ideal of female beauty of the time—broad shouldered, fullbosomed, with narrow waist and softly curvaceous hips. How she recalls to mind Kalidasa's famous lines: 'Slightly bent by the weight of her breasts,' and 'of slow gait by the burden of her hips'.

**Pl. 7. *Vrikshaka* or *Tree-goddess*** From the northern end of the East Gate, Stupa I, Sanchi. Post-Mauryan or early Satavahana period, c. 1st cent. B.C.

A bracket figure positioned between the upright and the architrave of the East Gate. The tree-nymph is shown under a mango tree holding a bunch of the fruit in the left hand. The sculpture is rather sensuous in the treatment of its form, the female figure's sensuality fully in keeping with her role as the spirit of natural fertility.

**Pl. 8. *A Donor Couple*** From Karla. Satavahana period, c. 1st-2nd cent. A.D. Trapstone.

Perhaps the heavily proportioned male and female figures in a panel on the verandah wall of the Chaitya most probably represent the donors of the Buddhist settlement at Karla. The heavy physique of both sexes clearly represents the regional ideals of bodily beauty in the early Satavahana period.

**Pl. 9. *Fragment of Railing*** From Bhutesvara, Mathura. Kushan period, 2nd cent. A.D. Red sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

The standing female figures seen on the pillars are those of Yakshis or tree-spirits. Lush flesh, youth and beauty, full bosomed, with slim waists and wide hips, they are the ideals of the Mathura females of Kushan times. Whether Yakshis or semi-divine creatures or just human beings, they stand with languorous grace and abandon, vibrant with sex, alluring, beckoning, the eternal She.

**Pl. 10. *Lady with a Bird Cage*** From a railing pillar, Bhutesvara, Mathura. Kushan period, 2nd cent. A.D. Red sandstone. Height, 129 cms. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

This is a close-up of the figure seen on the left of Plate 9. The female figure depicted is probably a Yakshi or tree-spirit. The parrot perched on the shoulder confirms the identification of the object in the right hand as a bird cage. The body

of the Yakshi is superbly modelled. At first sight, the figure seems to be unclothed, but the ridge across the feet clearly denotes that actually she is robed in a diaphanous skirt. The belief that she may be just an ordinary mortal and not a semi-divine being is strengthened by the everyday toilet scene carved above the figure. The significance of the crouching dwarf under her feet has so far eluded all explanation. Note the figures on the balcony above of the two women engaged in toilet.

**Pl. 11. *Bacchanalian Scene*** From Mahuli, near Mathura. Kushan period, c. 2nd cent. A.D. Stone. National Museum, New Delhi.

This drinking scene from Mathura has never been rightly explained. An apparently drunk woman is shown kneeling between two males. Her one arm is supported by a smaller figure. The whole work bears the signs of foreign influence, particularly Greek, but there is much doubt of any such influence. The sculptor's art here is free and mature. The grouping of the figures indicates advanced compositional skill. The facial expressions, the helplessness of the drunk female, the tenderness of the child, the helping hands of the other figures, all speak of an art rich in conceptual imagery, deep understanding of human nature and full of the experience of frail humanity.

**Pl. 12. *Prasadika Yakshi*** From Fyzabad. Mathura period, c. 2nd cent. A.D. Sandstone. Height, about 122 cms. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.

The figure here supports a stone bowl, with a covered basket in the upraised left hand and a water-vessel in the other. Here is the simplicity and lack of sophistication of early Indian art, but the technique is of a high order.

**Pl. 13. *A Couple*** From Nagarjunakonda. C. 2nd-3rd cent. A.D.

Many authorities now put Nagarjunakonda in the Ikshvaku period of the 3rd century A.D. Among the scenes of the life of the Buddha, many panels of a domestic nature are found at Nagarjunakonda, the most frequent being love scenes of a mildly sensuous nature. The men and women are sculptured with a freedom of expres-

sion as if the sculptor, free from the pressure of the Buddhist and other religious motifs, had just let himself go, revelling in the realisation of his art. The twisting human forms, the episodes chosen from normal everyday life, speak of a gay abandon on the part of the artist. The figures are rather elongated, yet their slenderness has a certain grace and charm. Though amorous, there is nothing obscene or objectionable here—just the tenderness of man for woman. 'The Mithuna [erotic] couples, charmingly sensuous in their poses and attitudes of dancing and dalliance, are the pride of Nagarjunakonda reliefs,' writes Amita Ray. In spite of the linear characteristics of the figures, the massiveness of the male and the plasticity of the female figures are somewhat attractive. Unfortunately, there is a lack of expressiveness in the faces. 'Even when they chose to be coquettish, they seem to be somewhat withdrawn from the experience itself (Amita Ray, 'Sculpture of Nagarjunakonda,' *Marg*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2)

**Pl. 14. *Miracle of Sravasti*** Gandhara period, c. 2nd-3rd cent. A.D.

King Prasenajit arranged a contest between the Buddha and the members of a heretical sect he desired to convert. The Buddha demonstrated his miraculous powers in many ways. At this great Miracle of Sravasti, the Buddha multiplied his bodily person in the air and was heard preaching from all sides. This sculptural piece symbolising the Miracle is typically in the Gandhara art idiom.

**Pl. 15. *Karttikeya*** Provenance unknown. Gupta period, c. 5th cent. A.D. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.

Karttikeya or Skanda is the Hindu god of war, offspring of Siva and Parvati, produced to subdue the troublesome demons. The Mayura (peacock) is his vehicle and he is generally depicted sitting on one, or it is represented nearby. Karttikeya holds aloft the Vajrayanta, the banner of Victory, in his left hand. The figure is rather stiff and uncompromising in attitude. But its massiveness and the plasticity of surface treatment makes it a good example of Gupta art. Some authorities place the sculpture in the 7th century, that is,

in the late Gupta period when there was a short revival of artistic activity after a period of decline.

**Pl. 16. *Standing Buddha***. From Mathura. Gupta period, 5th cent. A.D. Red sandstone. Height, 217 cms. National Museum, New Delhi.

This is one of the finest examples of Gupta art. The left hand holds one end of the robe which closely fits the body. The other hand is missing, but was probably in the Abhaya mudra, quelling fear, and promising assurance and protection. The large, delicately carved lotus-leaf nimbus behind the head deserves merit. It is filled with conventional motifs of the Gupta age. The closely curled hair is also conventional in treatment and the transparent drapery with thin folds is typical of the art of the period. However, the drapery is not as flimsy or delicate as of the Sarnath school of the Gupta period. This is truly a great masterpiece of the sculptor's art. The halo is richly carved yet stops short of being merely ornate. The Buddha breathes forth peace and compassion—invokes feelings of adoration and deep reverence.

**Pl. 17. *Head of the Buddha*** From Mathura. Gupta period, c. 5th cent. A.D.

This close-up gives a very good idea of the delicate yet forceful sculptural treatment of the Gupta age.

**Pl. 18. *Seated Buddha*** From Sarnath. Gupta period, c. 5th cent. A.D. Sandstone. Sarnath Museum.

It has been rightly said that it was the northern Sarnath school of Gupta art that created the perfect Buddha image. The Buddha is here represented in the attitude of preaching the First Sermon in the Deer Park near Banaras (Varanasi), seated in the Padmasana. The hands are in the Dharmachakra mudra, establishing the world of righteousness through the teaching of the Doctrine of the Law. The scroll work of the nimbus behind the head has the usual lotus-creeper motif, with two figures at the top. This carved halo helps to throw the figure into a sort of relief. The carving of the nimbus and the diaphanous drapery are characteristic of Gupta art.

Speaking of the Sarnath and the Mathura Buddha of Plate 16, René Grousset writes:

'The limbs are pure and harmonious, the face has a tranquil suavity, and it is inspired by an art so steeped in intellectualism as to be a direct expression of the soul through the purely ideal beauty of form' (*The Civilisation of the East*).

**Pl. 19. Head of the Buddha** From Sarnath Gupta period, c 5th-6th cent AD

This is a very fine piece of sculpture, the Buddha at peace with himself and the world, all desires and longing burnt out of the body and driven out of the soul. His serene expression is the expression of immortality. This masterpiece is a good example of the northern school of the 'Golden Age' of Indian Art.

**Pl. 20. Gajendramoksha** From the Dasavatara temple, Deogarh Gupta period, c 5th-6th cent AD.

This panel depicts the Kari-Varada aspect of God Vishnu in which he rescued Gajendra, Lord of the Elephants, a great devotee of Vishnu, from the clutches of an aquatic monster. The Bhagvata Purana tells how Gajendra, who was once a king but had been changed into an elephant by a curse, was sporting in a lake with his consorts, when he was caught by the legs by a water-monster. The fight went on for ages, and unable to free himself, Gajendra offered devout prayers to Vishnu. The latter flew to the rescue, riding on his vehicle, the man-Garuda. Below in the panel are seen the Naga king and queen in an attitude of adoration. Gajendra, his legs encircled by the monster, offers flowers to Lord Vishnu with his trunk in homage. Flying Vidya-dharas, celestial beings, are shown holding a crown over Lord Vishnu's head. Gajendra thus symbolises the power of faith and devotion.

**Pl. 21. Head of Parvati** From Ahichchhatra Gupta period, c 5th cent AD (probably AD 500). Terracotta Height, 12 cms. National Museum, New Delhi.

Parvati is the divine consort of Siva, the most important figure in the hierarchy of goddesses, and the most powerful in the Hindu pantheon. The heavy features, the drooping eyelids, the thick fleshy lips, may not be appealing, but perhaps they formed the canons of female beauty in the 5th century.

**Pl. 22. Nara-Narayana** From the Dasavatara temple, Deogarh. Gupta period, early 6th cent AD.

This harmonious composition represents the metaphysical idea of two-in-one, set in the Himalayan heights so suitable for meditation and yogic practices. The *Bhagvad Gita* advances the concept of the mortal and the immortal, of the transient and the eternal, which is rendered in this composition, for Nara is the original eternal man, 'divinity qualified,' and Narayana is God Vishnu. This duality principle of two-in-one is popular in Indian mythology and art, as for example, Ardhanarisvara, the composite representation of Siva and Shakti, the right half, male, and the left half, female. According to the Bhagvata Purana, among the twenty-two complete and partial or minor incarnations of Vishnu were the saints Nara and Narayana. They brought to the world the message of devotion and divine love, a clear understanding of spiritual realisation.

**Pl. 23. Sheshashayi Vishnu** From the Dasavatara temple, Deogarh Gupta period, early 6th cent AD.

This is a classic representation of Vishnu lying on the Nag Anantashesha, the cosmic serpent symbolising eternity. 'When Vishnu sleeps, the universe dissolves itself into its formless stage, represented as the casual ocean. The remnants of manifestation are represented as the serpent Remainder (Sesa) coiled upon itself and floating on the abysmal waters' (Alan Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*). Vishnu's consort massages his feet, the other gods and goddesses keeping vigil. This sculpture of Sheshashayi Vishnu or Vishnu Anantasayin, depicts the Brahmanical myth—the eternal silence of the cosmos before creation, and the withdrawal of the Universal Self into itself. The gods of Indra's Heaven are shown above the sleeping Vishnu, in a panel below are the heroes of the world, the five Pandava brothers, and their common wife Draupadi, as immortalized in the *Mahabharata*. In the words of H. G. Rawlinson, 'The extraordinary vigour, and at the same time, the calm and majestic repose and dignity of these figures is extremely impressive.'

**Pl. 24. Seated Buddha.** From Mirpur Khas. C. early 6th cent A.D. Terracotta. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay

Buddha sits here in the Padmasana, the pose for contemplation and deep meditation. Of the many Buddha figures from Mirpur Khas in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, this is perhaps the best. It may be said to be in the Indianised Gandhara idiom. The floriated nimbus behind the head is of the Gupta type

**Pl. 25. Female Figure** From Rajmahal, Bihar. C. 6th-7th cent A.D. Light coloured sandstone. Height, 81.5 cms. Patna Museum

This figure though not in the full round is carved in very deep relief in a panel framed on the two sides with rosettes. The depiction in stone of the filmy lower garment is characteristic of Indian art of the time. The diaphanous garment has been delicately chiselled but the upper part of the body is apparently bare. The ornate girdle and the armlets are worth noting as well as the neat and elaborate coiffure. Is she feeding the bird at her feet?

**Pl. 26. Anantasheshashayi Vishnu** From the Huchchappayya-gudi, Aihole. Western Chalukyan period, c. 6th-7th cent A.D. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay

This sculpture appears in a panel on the ceiling of the Mandapa (hall). Vishnu in his passive form is depicted resting on the seven-hooded Nag Ananta (Adi Shesha), symbolising timeless eternity, floating on the primordial waters, Nara, between two world cycles. The soft and plastic contours of the reclining Vishnu seem to melt into one another. The handsome face and the reposeful attitude of the body are suffused with a feeling of inward bliss, utter peace and contentment. This aspect of Vishnu is popularly worshipped. Generally passive, Vishnu rouses himself to action when unrighteousness reigns in the world—to redeem it from its misfortunes and ills and restore the balance between good and evil. At the destruction of the universe at the end of each Kalpa of time, Vishnu reverts to this pose of inaction. It is sometimes related that Brahma arose out of a lotus growing from his navel as he thus sleeps on the eternal coils of

Shesha on the cosmic ocean, the still waters of Nara.

Dr. Stella Kramrisch dates the sculpture to the 7th-8th century A.D.

**Pl. 27. Siva and Parvati** From Aihole. Early Western Chalukyan period, c. 6th cent A.D. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

This is fairly early art, yet the rhythm of the figures and their plastic fluidity speak very highly of the Chalukyan sculptor's skill and aesthetic sense. Here is power and majesty on one side; grace and loving tenderness on the other. Siva and Parvati represent the archetypal lovers—spirit and matter, from whose union result the many worlds.

**Pl. 28. Brahma.** From the Huchchappayya-gudi, Aihole. Early Western Chalukyan period, 6th-7th cent A.D. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay

Brahma, one of the Hindu Trinity, is the Lord of Creation. His four faces represent the four quarters of the world. One of his attributes is a water-pot, symbolising plenty and prosperity. He holds the Vedas in another hand, symbolising All Wisdom. He may also hold a sacrificial spoon, and a rosary denoting his spirituality. The fourth hand is in the Varada mudra gesture of promise or fulfilment. Brahma is here surrounded by Rishis (sages) in the act of adoration.

**Pl. 29. Flying Couple** From Badami. Western Chalukyan period, c. 6th cent A.D.

The flying figures are probably Vidyadharas, the aerial spirits or celestial demi-gods. Their easy pose speaks of their free movement among the clouds; the drawn-up legs suggest the motion of flying through the air. This is a common artistic idiom to represent the feeling of flight and its depiction is common in Chalukyan art. As Radhakamal Mukerjee says, they are 'symbolic of the flight of human consciousness and transcendence,' of the ascent to heaven. They could also be the celestial flying Gandharvas, the musicians and choristers of Indra's heaven. See also Plate 40.

**Pl. 30. Nagaraja with His Consort and Attendants** From Cave No. 19, Ajanta. Vakataka period, 5th-6th cent. A.D.

The people called the Nagas have a historical origin and their kings reigned at many places—note the survival of their name in modern Nagpur. Little is known about them, but they were probably a non-Hindu race and perhaps belonged to an alien tribe. They worshipped serpents (Naga means cobra), holding them in great reverence. Hence their name. The sculpture here depicted is rightly appreciated for its artistic merit and its plastic beauty.

**Pl. 31. *Hara-Parvati*** From Bihar C. 6th-7th cent. A.D. Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta.

Hara is the name of Siva, and Parvati is his consort. Note the Nandi (Bull), Siva's vehicle, under his feet.

**Pl. 32. *Maheshamurti*** From Elephanta Post-Gupta Rashtrakuta period, c. 7th-8th cent. A.D. Rock sculpture. Height, 360 cms.

Commonly and erroneously called the Trimurti, this colossal image dramatically represents Siva as Mahadeva or Mahesha, with his ferocious aspect as Bhairava, the Destroyer, on the left and the face of his gentle consort Uma on the right. Percy Brown, Burgess and others date Elephanta to the late half of the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century A.D. Originally this sculpture was incorrectly identified as Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva as a composite image. This masterpiece is internationally famous for its great plastic qualities, set as it is in a deep niche in the rock which lends additional mystery and dynamism to the forceful composition, executed with great vigour and rare artistic genius. The great French art critic, Rene Grousset, has said: 'The three countenances of the one being are here harmonized without a trace of effort; there are few representations of the divine principle at once as powerful and as well balanced as this in the art of the whole world. Nay, more, here we have undoubtedly the grandest representation of the pantheist God ever made by the hand of man.'

**Pl. 33. *Chamardharini*** From Akota. C. 7th cent. A.D. Bronze.

This bronze figure probably is that of an attendant to a divinity, with a fly-whisk in the right hand. Perhaps she is a semi-divine being herself.

**Pl. 34. *Buddha in Dharmachakra Pravartan Mudra***. From Ratnagiri C. 7th cent. A.D.

The two hands raised before the chest are in the gesture of teaching the Doctrine of the Law, the hand pose used by the Buddha when expounding his teachings.

**Pl. 35. *Dance Panel*** From Cave No. 7, Aurangabad. Vakataka period in the Deccan, c. 7th cent. A.D.

This is perhaps the best piece of sculptural art at the Aurangabad caves, but inferior to the best at Ellora. However, the treatment of the filmy lower garment of the dancer is worth noting, as also the graceful dance posture and the rapt expression on her face. Musicians naturally accompany the dance.

**Pl. 36. *Siva Nataraja*** From Cave No. 21 (Ramesvara), Ellora. Rashtrakuta period, c. 7th-8th cent. A.D.

Here is Siva in his aspect as the Lord of the Dance, symbolical of his cosmic function of creation, preservation and destruction of the world at the beginning and end of every Kalpa of time. In the eternal whirl of the dance is concentrated rhythm and power, as the gods in the clouds above witness the whirlwind of its motion. His consort, deep in meditation and rapture, sits on the left together with attendants. A lone male musician plays a wind instrument on the other side of the dancing Lord.

**Pl. 37. *Dancing Siva***. From Cave No. 14 (Ravana-ki-khai), Ellora. Rashtrakuta period, c. 8th cent. A.D.

This is another forceful sculpture in stone of Siva dancing his dance of creation and destruction, birth and death. The powerful rhythm has been well expressed and so is the furious whirlwind of the cosmic dance. Here is Siva in the Lalita dance that is both rather graceful and dynamic at the same time. He stands in the Tribhanga attitude (with triple bends of the body), on his slightly bent left leg, the weight of the body shifted to the right and slightly backwards, the left hip raised higher than the other. In this Lalita type of the dance there is no demon under his feet as in the Tandava or Nadanta dances, and in one of his eight hands he carries

a long mace. This mode of dance is rather lyrical and in this particular piece of sculpture, the artist has endowed the dancing god almost with the grace of a female figure.

**Pl. 38. *Ravana Lifting Mount Kailasa*** From Cave No. 16 (Kailasanath), Ellora. Rashtrakuta period, second half of the 8th to early 9th cent. A.D.

This masterpiece is a great achievement of the ancient Indian sculptor, considering the superb plastic treatment of the whole panel, empty and dark hollows playing an important part in the composition. Ravana shakes Mount Kailasa in intimidation, but the great God Siva, serene and untroubled, overcomes the threat by a mere touch of his toe. The dread in the face of Parvati clinging to her Lord is well depicted as is also the fear of her fleeing attendants.

**Pl. 39. *A Naga*** From Alampur. C. 8th cent. A.D.

The Naga is a mythical semi-divine being with a human face, cobra hoods behind, and the tail of a serpent. They were said to have been created in order to inhabit Patala, the nether regions under the earth, where they live and reign with great splendour. The sculptor's conception of coiling the Naga tail to form a frame round the face and figure is noteworthy. See also Note to Plate 30.

**Pl. 40. *A Flying Couple*** From Alampur. C. 8th cent. A.D.

The figures depicted here are probably Vidyadharas, semi-divine beings whose celestial abode is the sky. They probably symbolize metaphysically the soul's ascent to Heaven. See also Plate 29.

**Pl. 41. *Tripurantaka Murti*** From Madras. Pallava period, c. 8th-9th cent. A.D. Bronze. Height, 64 cms. Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmadabad.

Siva in this form is portrayed in his terrific aspect. In metal images the figure is always much simplified and is often depicted without the usual bow and arrow employed to destroy the three demons, always shown in the stone sculptures. Siva is here represented with only two

hands and not with four as usual. These hands are in the posture of holding the bow and arrow although they are not actually shown. This is one of the finest of Pallava bronzes.

**Pl. 42. *A Group of Musicians*** From Abaneri, near Bharatpur. Post-Gupta Gurjara-Pratihara period, c. 8th-9th cent. A.D.

The figures are crude in expression and execution, yet there is a naive charm and decorativeness about this sculptural panel. It is perhaps more decorative than artistic, as if the sculptor actually meant it to be so. Not art but ornamentation.

**Pl. 43. *Standing Buddha*** From Nalanda. C. 9th cent. A.D. Bronze. National Museum, New Delhi.

This is a beautiful piece of sculpture, the face serene and composed, the treatment of the drapery elegant and stylistic. Some authorities place this sculpture as early as the 7th cent. A.D., during the brief renaissance of Gupta art. It does bear some of the characteristics of the late Gupta period.

**Pl. 44. *Kalyana Sundara Murti*** From Kanauj. Gurjara-Pratihara period, c. 9th cent. A.D.

The panel depicts the marriage of Siva and Parvati with the lesser gods assembled to witness the ceremony hovering above the central figures. There is Yama on his buffalo, Varuna on Makara, Indra on his elephant, also to be seen are Nirriti on a human mount, Surya, Kubera, Ganesh and others. Brahma is tending the sacred fire.

**Pl. 45. *Seated Buddha*** From Kurkihar, Bihar. Pala period, c. 9th cent. A.D. Bronze.

This is a good example of metal sculpture of the Pala school. The Buddha is seated in Padmasana, the seat of contemplation, on a carved lotus throne, with rearing griffons on the two sides and lions on the pedestal of the throne seat.

**Pl. 46. *Graceful Female Figure*** From Jamshod. C. 10th cent. A.D. Allahabad Museum.

Nothing much is known about this sculpture, but it is a good example of the technical skill of the artist of the early medieval period. The triple flexions of the body (Tribhanga pose) are greatly exaggerated and the crossed legs are stiff.



and artificially arranged. However, there is considerable grace about the figure and the heavy ornamentation has been carved in deep relief and great detail. The monkey trying to climb up the body of the woman adds an amusing touch to the composition. The former austerity of artistic conception was now beginning to relax.

**Pl. 47. *Uma-Mahesvara*** From Madras C 10th cent A.D.

This is one of the common representations of Siva in his benign aspect, shown with his consort, the left hand round her shoulders. She holds a flower in her left hand. In such representations, Uma's right arm is generally placed round the god's waist. But here it rests gracefully on his left thigh. The Trisula (trident) in Siva's right hand is one of his attributes, and is always present in sculptures representing him.

**Pl. 48. *Female Torso*** From Gwalior C 10th cent A.D. Gwalior Museum

This figure is often identified as a bust of Parvati, some authorities dating it as early as the 7th century.

**Pl. 49. *Standing Female Figure*** From the Devi Temple, Jagat C 10th cent A.D.

This graceful figure with arms raised and hands interlocked in the Torana pose and with the legs crossed unnaturally is perhaps a Nayika, the embodiment of womanhood, frequently depicted in medieval sculpture in many amorous and alluring poses. Also see the following Plate.

**Pl. 50. *A Nayika*** From the Lingaraja temple, Bhubaneswar. Kalinga period, c 1000 A.D. Sandstone

In medieval art, a Nayika was considered a damsel of the gods, often a dancer, and invariably carved in amorous moods and poses. She stood for the ideal of female loveliness of the time. With a beautiful face, smiling lips, alluring figure, the Nayika here stands in the Tribhanga pose (triple bends of the body)—a celestial beauty fully conscious of her looks and her charms, in spite of the downcast looks and feigned modesty. Also see the previous Plate.

**Pl. 51. *Varuna*** From the Rajarani temple, Bhubaneswar. Kalinga period, c 1000 A.D. Sandstone

One of the oldest of the Vedic deities, Varuna was the 'all-embracer,' the upholder of Heaven and Earth, a personification of 'the all-investing sky,' ruler of the day and night. He is generally depicted carrying a noose with which to fetter sinners. Being the guardian of cosmic law, he is perpetually on the look-out for human transgressions. Once the chief of the Vedic gods, he later lost this position to Indra. Today, he is only a minor deity, the guardian of the western quarter of the universe, and has become associated with water—a deity of the seas and rivers.

**Pl. 52. *Lady Removing Her Anklet*** From the Rajarani temple, Bhubaneswar. Kalinga period, c 1000 A.D. Sandstone

This sculpture, like the Nayika of Plate 50, is typical of the art of the early 11th century.

**Pl. 53. *Close-up of Siva*** From the Parsvanatha temple, Khajuraho. Chandella period, late 10th to early 11th cent. Sandstone

There is a profusion of figure sculpture at Khajuraho, but not all is of the same high quality. Apparently the execution varied with the skill of the sculptor. This is, however, a good example of Chandella art.

**Pl. 54. *Lady with a Paint Board*** From Khajuraho. Chandella period, c 11th cent A.D. Sandstone. Height, 70 cms.

Formerly believed to be from Bhubaneswar, this sculpture is now rightly attributed to the Chandella period of Khajuraho on stylistic grounds. Commonly spoken of as the lady writing a love-letter, she is actually drawing or painting as in those days the letter was a long scroll and not a thick tablet as seen in the sculpture. The figure has a lot of sensuous appeal and the rapt expression on the face has been rendered with great skill. Also see Plate 55.

**Pl. 55. *Mother and Child*** From Khajuraho. Chandella period, 11th cent A.D. Sandstone. Height of full figure, 92 cms. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

This beautiful piece of sculpture, with its plastic fluidity of treatment and the ornate details, was also attributed to Bhubaneswar but is definitely of Khajuraho origin. The mother and child

motif was common from the Kushan period and is mentioned in the *Shilpa* texts. Also see Plate 54.

**Pl. 56. *Lady with a Looking Glass.*** From Khajuraho Chandella period, 11th cent A.D. Sandstone. Height of full figure, 95.5 cms. National Museum, New Delhi.

The convex metal mirror in the left hand is typical of the time. The right hand has been raised to the head to apply vermillion (*Sindur*) to the parting of the hair, a common custom in those days, and sometimes practised even today. The rendering of the figure, the plastic grace and the modelling of the features all help to place this masterpiece among the best of medieval times.

**Pl. 57. *Siva and Parvati.*** From the Parsvanatha temple, Khajuraho Chandella period, 11th cent A.D. Sandstone.

This is a composite treatment of Siva and his consort Parvati. He holds his attributes in his hands, the whirling discus and the conch-shell, the left arm embracing the goddess. Here is tenderness on the divine plane, a masterly and sensitive depiction of a god and goddess, Siva and his Shakti, and their conjugal bliss. She has apparently just finished her toilet, if the metal mirror in her hand is any indication. She may be a goddess, but she is also a woman with seductive charms. Especially noteworthy are the gentle Tribhanga flexions of both the figures, and the earthly beauty and bodily charm of the goddess. The light and shadow, the plastic treatment, the massiveness and flowing rhythm, make this one of the finest sculptures at Khajuraho. The fond embrace of the divine pair, the love radiating from their faces, the merging of soul unto soul, may be on a high plane, but here also is the eternal mutual attraction between man and woman.

**Pl. 58. *A Woman Applying Collyrium to Her Eyes.*** From the Parsvanatha temple, Khajuraho Chandella period, 11th cent A.D. Sandstone.

The female is perhaps a Surasundari, a divine damsel of the gods, the ideal of feminine beauty. Such figures, in seductive and amorous poses,

were frequently carved on the temple walls in medieval times.

**Pl. 59. *A Lady Playing on the Flute.*** From the Vishwanatha temple, Khajuraho. Chandella period, 11th cent A.D. Sandstone.

Although represented by a back view, this is a most graceful pose which has allowed the sculptor full scope for his art and technique. The beautiful bodily lines are eloquent with a fluidity of artistic expression and physical values.

**Pl. 60. *Salabhanjika.*** From Khajuraho Chandella period, 11th cent A.D. Sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

In medieval Indian art, the *Salabhanjika* typifies the ideal of feminine beauty and is always depicted in conjunction with a tree. She is a tree-spirit, akin to the *Yakshi* or *Vrikshaka* of classical times. She perhaps also stands as a symbol of fertility and procreation.

**Pl. 61. *Close-up of a Female Figure.*** From the Vishwanatha temple, Khajuraho. Chandella period, 11th cent A.D. Sandstone.

This extremely attractive piece of sculpture, beautifully chiselled, offers one more example of the genius of the Chandella sculptor. The plastic modelling of the body and the surface treatment of the stone could hardly be surpassed.

**Pl. 62. *A Female Figure.*** From Gyaspur, Madhya Pradesh. Gurjara-Pratihara period, c. 11th cent A.D. Archaeological Museum, Gwalior.

The figure probably represents a *Salabhanjika*, a tree-spirit, and may date from a period as early as the 10th cent A.D. The Tribhanga pose has all the sculptural and decorative qualities of good Indian medieval art. The coiffure and detailed ornamentation are especially noteworthy. The skirt or girdle is of a type not often met with in sculptures of this period.

**Pl. 63. *Sarasvati.*** From the Sundarban. C. 11th cent A.D.

*Sarasvati* is the divine consort of Brahma, the Creator, and is herself the goddess of learning, wisdom and culture, patroness of the arts and the sciences. She holds in her hands the *Veena*, her attribute, a musical instrument she is

supposed to have created according to Indian mythology

**Pl. 64. *Mother and Child*** From the Rajshahi District, Bengal Pala period, c 11th cent A.D.

This is a fairly common motif—the Indian Madonna—and probably represents Yasoda with the infant god Krishna (an avatar of Vishnu). Perhaps the mother and child are Mahamaya and the infant Buddha. The sculpture has also been interpreted as showing the newly born Siva, as the *Brahma Purana* tells a story of Siva as the 'eternal babe'. The mother elegantly holds a lotus in the right hand, looking down lovingly on her offspring, while an attendant massages her left foot. The composition is well conceived and though the sculptural qualities may not be of a very high order due to a certain stiffness and lack of fluidity, there is a perceptible power in the treatment of the figures which makes this definitely a masterpiece of the Pala school. Some authorities date it to an earlier century.

**Pl. 65. *Nataraja*** From Gangaikonda Cholapuram C 11th cent A.D.

Nataraja is the representation of god Siva as the Lord of the Dance, most often depicted in bronze. He is the Supreme Yogi whose dance symbolises the unity of Being, the eternal Cosmic Dancer. He is the Creator, Preserver and the final Hope of man, from whose frenzied dance radiate all the movements of the cosmos, lifting 'humanity from the temporal to the eternal realities'. The dwarf under his right foot is Apasamara, the demon of ignorance and illusion, whom the dancing god tramples into dust.

**Pl. 66. *Vrishavantaka and Devi*** From Tiruvenkadu, Tanjore District Early Chola period, A.D. 1011. Bronze. Height, 106.5 cms (male figure), 92 cms (female figure). Tanjore Art Gallery.

This is a very unusual representation of Siva with his hand apparently resting on the head of his Bull vehicle Nandi, who is not shown. Close by stands his consort Devi in an elegant and graceful pose, apparently holding a lotus in her right hand, which again is not shown. The right hand of the god is almost in a dance pose. The hair is beautifully done up, and almost looks

like a turban with a cobra wound round it. The decorative girdle has been delicately chiselled in bas-relief. Without doubt this is a very fine example of early Chola art.

**Pl. 67. *Simhanada Avalokitesvara*** From Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh C 12th cent A.D. Lucknow Museum.

Avalokitesvara, Bodhisattva of Compassion, is shown here on a lion seat, and hence Simhanada (Simha, lion). Such figures are always depicted with a soft bodily charm and a face full of serenity, peace and understanding. The pose of the figure in this sculpture is extremely pleasant.

**Pl. 68. *Bodhisattva Padmapani*** From Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh C 12th cent A.D. Lucknow Museum.

This sculpture is very similar in composition and treatment to the Simhanada Avalokitesvara of the previous Plate. Padmapani is another name for Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, always full of grace and serenity, radiating compassion and tenderness for humanity at large. This is an example of faultless artistic perfection, plastic fluidity and grace of countenance, characteristic of the Buddhist sculptures of Mahoba.

**Pl. 69. *Vishnu*** From Sagardighi Sena period C 12th cent A.D. Bronze. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum, Calcutta.

This is the Hrishikesa form of Vishnu, seated in the Maharajalilasana, a pose of royal ease; the hand placed near the knee of the bent leg. This masterpiece in bronze has been attributed to the 10th cent by some authorities.

**Pl. 70. *A Female Figure*** From Markanda C. 12th cent A.D.

Though badly mutilated, there is considerable charm in this figure with the left arm raised to the head—a common idiom of the Indian sculptor of the Middle Ages. The full bosom and the wide hips contrast with the restrictive waist line. The ornamentation though depicted in detail, is of a prosaic nature.

**Pl. 71. *Female Dancing Figure*** From the Hoyasalesvara temple, Halebidu 12th cent A.D. Schist.

The heavy ornamentation and intricate craftsmanship, lacking in the true artistic sense, is typical of Hoysala art. Such figures appear profusely on the outer walls of the temple erected by Ketamalla, an officer of King Vishavardhana, between A.D. 1120 and 1141. The heavy decorative sculpture is Baroque in nature. Here is excellent craftsmanship but little art.

**Pl. 72. *Garuda*.** From Belur. Hoysala period, 12th cent. A.D. Schist.

The man-bird Garuda is the vehicle of God Vishnu. Cheerful, full of human expression, this half-man, half-bird, is 'emblematic of the flight of consciousness that captures ambrosia from heaven' (Radhakamal Mukerjee). Garuda stands with hands folded in the Anjali mudra, in adoration and obeisance. The wings are small yet powerful. The heavy ornamentation of the figure is in keeping with his importance as the vehicle of the great God Vishnu.

**Pl. 73. *A Female Bracket Figure*.** From the Chennakesava temple, Belur. Hoysala period, 12th cent. A.D. Schist.

The heavy ornamentation and minute carving of the canopy is typical of Hoysala art. Superb as is the carver's skill with the chisel and hammer, Hoysala art lacks the touch of true artistic genius. Here is probably a musician with an ancient wind instrument in her hands.

**Pl. 74. *A Female Figure in a Dancing Pose*.** From the Chennakesava temple, Belur. Hoysala period, 12th cent. A.D. Schist.

Dancers and musicians are freely depicted both at Belur and Halebidu. The dancer here is probably a Madanikai, a celestial nymph or divine damsel of the gods, posed in a highly ornate niche. Her body has grace and form though tending towards a certain heaviness. The workmanship as usual is superb even though lacking in the flash of artistic inspiration and plastic conception.

**Pl. 75. *Madanikai with a Looking Glass*.** From the Chennakesava temple, Belur. Hoysala period, 12th cent. A.D. Schist.

Here is a Madanikai (see note to previous Plate) admiring herself in a convex metal mirror so typical of the medieval period. The same type

appears in the sculptures of Khajuraho and elsewhere. The female form, with its bends and plasticity, though a little on the heavy side, has been rendered with a great deal of skill. The profuse ornamentation though carved with great technical skill in the soft chloritic schist, is over-detailed and too profuse to satisfy the true artistic sense.

**Pl. 76. *A Huntress*.** From Mysore. 12th cent. A.D. Schist.

This sculpture has all the florid ornamentation and detailed craftsmanship of Hoysala art. The minuteness of the carving was made possible by the use of soft schist as a basic material, cutting like wax under the carver's chisel.

**Pl. 77. *The Chamunda Bull*.** From the Chamunda Hill, Hanamkonda, Mysore. Late Chalukyan period, 12th cent. A.D.

The Bull Nandi is the vehicle of Siva and is always associated with him in Indian art and mythology. It is symbolic of Siva's ascetism and rigid religious discipline and the figure of the Nandi is always conspicuous before temples dedicated to Siva. The style of sculpture here is simple and the anatomy fairly correct. The heavy ornamentation is in the Hoysala style.

**Pl. 78. *Sarasvati*.** From Bikaner. C. 12-13th cent. A.D.

This is a very graceful sculpture of the consort of Brahma, herself the goddess of music, learning and culture. Note the attendant musicians on the two sides of the figure. Sarasvati invariably holds in her hands a lotus and a manuscript or scroll. The water-pot in the lower left hand is perhaps symbolic of remembrance of the past, the secrets of life and wisdom. The sculptural qualities of this masterpiece are rather akin to Jain art.

**Pl. 79. *Siva as Nataraja*.** From Tiruvengaladu, North Arcot District, Madras State. Chola period, c. 1100 A.D. Bronze. Height, 114.5 cms. Government Museum, Madras.

Siva as the Lord of the Dance is his most common representation in South Indian bronzes. This is a very fine piece of sculpture, a true masterpiece, and evoked the admiration of the famous European sculptor, Rodin. The anatomo-

mical delineation is superb, the movement and rhythm of the figure, the simple ornamentation, the modelling of the details, definitely make this one of the greatest productions of the Chola period. Siva is the Divine Dancer who interprets the Law of the Universe, visualized in terms of motion and vibration. To the Indian mind, Siva's dance is a personification of the cosmic forces of Nature. In his dance he symbolises the kinetic aspect, the pulsing force through the power of which the whole Universe is created, sustained and finally destroyed. Here is disintegration and renewal, birth and death, of the Cosmic Universe. In the South Indian images of Nataraja, the damaru (drum) beats out the rhythm of the Time process. The flame in the dancer's upper left hand symbolises the holy sacrificial fire, the lower left hand, stretched downwards across the body, pointing to the uplifted left foot—'the refuge of Salvation'. The lower right hand in Abhaya mudra promises protection. Under his one foot is Muyalaka, the demon of darkness and ignorance, 'the dark cloud of materialism in the Eternal Ether (*Akasa*), which disappears in the Sunshine of the Divine Spirit'. The rhythm and compositional balance pervading this masterpiece of late Chola art has rarely been surpassed.

**Pl. 80. Lokanath or Lokesvara.** From Kurkihar, Bihar. Pala period. C. 12th cent. A.D. Bronze. Patna Museum.

Lokanath, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is here seated in the easy Lalitasana pose. Well ornamented, he holds flowers in both hands. The chiselling is detailed and the ornamentation almost borders on the art of the Nepal school which itself was influenced by the Palas and the Senas.

**Pl. 81. A Kiss—Close-up of a Loving Couple.** From the Surya temple, Konarak, Orissa. Eastern Ganga period, 13th cent. A.D. Sandstone.

These figures are from a side wall of the Jagmohan or main hall and although the soft sandstone may have badly weathered from the salty sea air, this sculpture still bears all the signs of the skill and genius of the Kalinga sculptor.

The expressive and mobile features, the plastic qualities of the composition, the absorbed expression of the mating lovers, suffuse this masterly piece of sculpture with human warmth and pulsing life.

**Pl. 82. The Drummer.** From the Surya temple, Konarak, Orissa. Eastern Ganga period, 13th cent. A.D. Sandstone.

Such colossal figures of drummers and other musicians, all in the round, stand on the tiers of the roof of the Jagmohan or main hall. They represent the finest in the plastic art of medieval times. There is a whisper of seductiveness in the drummer's taut erect body.

**Pl. 83. The Cymbal Player.** From the Surya temple, Konarak, Orissa. Eastern Ganga period, 13th cent. A.D. Sandstone.

Like the previous Plate this colossal figure stands on the roof tops of the main hall, a masterpiece of the sculptor's art. One can almost hear the harsh clang of the large cymbals reverberating in the still air.

**Pl. 84. War-horse and Warrior.** From the precincts of the Surya temple, Konarak, Orissa. Eastern Ganga period, 13th cent. A.D. Sandstone.

This monumental piece of monolithic sculpture of colossal size, like the elephant of Pl. 85, stands in the courtyard of the temple. This free-standing statuary is a masterpiece of Indian medieval art. Very noteworthy is the delineation of the strength of the war-steed and the straining pose of the attendant warrior. This is considered by many to be the finest, over life-size, free standing sculpture in the whole plastic art of India. Standing in the precincts of the deserted and crumbling Temple of the Sun, 'it would be difficult to conceive anything in animal sculpture more forceful than this great horse' (Karl Khan-dalavala).

**Pl. 85. War-elephant.** From the precincts of the Surya temple, Konarak, Orissa. Eastern Ganga period, 13th cent. A.D. Sandstone.

Like the war-horse of the previous Plate, this colossal monolithic elephant, destroying its enemy, stands free in the temple courtyard. Here is

noticeable all the ferocity, all the bulk and strength of a war-elephant, often used in ancient times.

**Pl. 86. *Rishu Patni*** From Darasuram Late Chola period, c 13th cent. A.D.

A *Rishu Patni* is the spouse of a sage 'A pair of damsels their garments slipping off, is an exquisite carving which almost appears like the realisation of a sculptor's dream' (C Sivaramamurti) Rishis or sages are supposed to have been created by Brahma out of his own skin, and are like his sons, says Hindu mythology. It is they who wrote the Vedic hymns and could foresee what was likely to happen in the whole Universe. Some of them were so powerful that they were respected and feared even by the gods.

**Pl. 87. *A Dance Panel*** From the Ramappa temple, Palampet Kakatiya period, c 13th cent. A.D.

The Ramappa temple is rich in sculpture, with elaborately carved pillars and ceiling. The art here is graceful even if not of an extremely high artistic quality. It is however strong in compositional quality.

Palampet stands on the shores of Ramappa Lake, about 40 miles north-east of Hanamkonda where stands the Nandi of Plate 77. The temples here have been called 'the brightest stars in the galaxy of medieval Deccan temples' (G. Yardani).

**Pl. 88. *A Bracket Figure*** From the Ramappa temple, Palampet Kakatiya period, c 13th cent. A.D.

The glistening pillars with bracket figures in various dance poses are common in the temples of Kakatiya times. A peculiarity to be noted is the slight elongation of the figures, which is also noticeable in the dancers of the previous Plate.

**Pl. 89. *Nataraja*** South Indian, c 13th cent. A.D. Bronze. Tanjore Art Gallery.

This is a fine specimen of the South Indian Nataraja figures. Here again is energy personified, the body and displaced arms suggesting a balance of the whirlwind dance. Encircled in a halo of flames—the Hall of the Universe—the Lord of the Dance vanquishes the demon of darkness and ignorance under his trampling right foot, the other swinging to the rhythm of the dance.

The symbolic damaru (drum) in the upper right hand beats out the cosmic pulse of Time, the upper left holding the fire of divinity. The other left arm pointing downwards towards the feet emphasises the destruction of illusion and ignorance. There is a great difference in the feeling of movement and rhythm created by the sculptor in the different metal images. The Nataraja here illustrated is one in a quieter mood, yet the components of the figure are so well composed, fill the space within the circlet of flames so adequately, that the Divine Dancer, although in a state of suspended motion, pulsates with life and movement, 'in the sense that a spinning top or a gyrostatis at rest' (A. K. Coomaraswamy).

**Pl. 90. *Parvati*** From Tanjore, Madras State. Late Chola period, c. 13th cent. A.D. Bronze. Height, 66 cms. Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmadabad.

Parvati is the consort of Siva and here she is depicted in bronze in a very graceful pose. The treatment of the well chiselled drapery is delicate. Bronze figures of Parvati are very common in South Indian art.

**Pl. 91. *The Chola Queen*** From the Chingleput District, Madras State. Late Chola period, 13th cent. A.D. Bronze, height 53.5 cms. Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmadabad. This is a famous and very beautiful piece of metal sculpture, richly garbed and ornamented. The fluidity of the bodily lines almost seems to soften the hard metal into living flesh. The incising of the drapery is superb. The left hand is in the pose of holding a lotus while the other hangs loose and relaxed by the side.

**Pl. 92. *Mohini*** From the Jalakantesvara temple, Vellore. Vijayanagar period, c 16th cent. A.D.

Mohini is the female aspect of Vishnu, the feminine form sometimes adopted by him at the churning of the ocean for Ambrosia, during the tussle between the gods and the asuras (signifying the struggle between Good and Evil), Vishnu suddenly appeared transformed into a beautiful woman—Mohini. She was deputed to distribute the nectar equally, but she gave a drink to the gods and withheld it from the asuras, disappearing as suddenly as she had appeared.

Mohini is invariably depicted with a beautiful face, of almost celestial quality. She is shown with sparse clothing and ornaments, in a mild Tribhanga pose. It is said that she was so beautiful that Siva seduced her and she bore a child by him

**Pl. 93. *Figure from a Pillar*** From the Virabhadra temple, Leepakshi. Vijayanagar period, 16th cent. A.D.

This is a figure from a pillar in the temple. By the 16th century the art of the South was on the decline; and in spite of its apparent 'prettiness' and skilled workmanship—more that of the craftsman than that of the artist—the heavy ornamentation, the profusely carved pillar details, the very artificial pose of the figure, the heavy ornateness, the work speaks of artistic decadence.

**Pl. 94. *A Female Musician from a Pillar*** From the Ramaswamy temple, Kumbakonam. Nayak period, c. 16th cent. A.D.

Though exuberantly sculptured and profusely ornamented and smooth textured, there is a certain stiffness and artificiality in the plastic art of the time, a sign of decadence that set in after the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire

**Pl. 95. *Rati*** From the Meenakshi temple, Madurai. Nayak period, c. 17th cent. A.D.

Rati is the Venus of the Hindus, wife of Kama, the god of love, and herself the goddess of sexual pleasure. Like Kama she also rides on a parrot. This is a bracket figure from the thousand-pillared Mandapa (hall) of the temple

**Pl. 96. *Deepa Lakshmi*** From Madurai, c. 17th cent. A.D.

The Deepa Lakshmi is the figure of a female holding a tray for the oil and the wicks. These are votive lamps and are very characteristic of the South Indian image makers' imagination and artistry. These lamps were either kept burning before the deities in the temples, as a symbol of the donor's devotion, or were used for the Arati (the waving of the lamp) ceremony.

**Pl. 97. *Krishna*** From Nepal. C. 17th cent. A.D. Copper-gilt

Krishna is the most lovable aspect of Vishnu, full of fun and frolic. Here he is exquisitely jewelled and costumed and stands in an easy dance pose. The arms and legs are poised gracefully, yet denote great rhythmic movement.

**Pl. 98. *Uma-Maheshvara*** From Uttar Pradesh. Indian Museum, Calcutta

Siva and his consort Parvati or Uma are shown in the standard idiom. Siva sits as usual in the Sukhasana pose of comfort and ease, one leg folded to rest on the seat, the other pendant. This is the seat adopted by the gods when in the company of their consorts or when in their passive or benign moods. The goddess sits on his left thigh, Siva's left arm encircling her. This is the classical composition.

**Pl. 99. *Sarasvati*** From Subania. Gwalior Museum

Sarasvati, the consort of Brahma and the goddess of music and learning, the arts and the sciences, is usually depicted seated on a lotus plinth with one leg folded and the other pendant, the Sukhasana pose. With calm and benign features, she usually holds a book or scroll, a lotus or a rosary in the two back hands, and a musical instrument, generally the Veena, in the two front ones. Her vehicle, the Mayura (peacock), is often shown nearby, although it is absent in this composition.

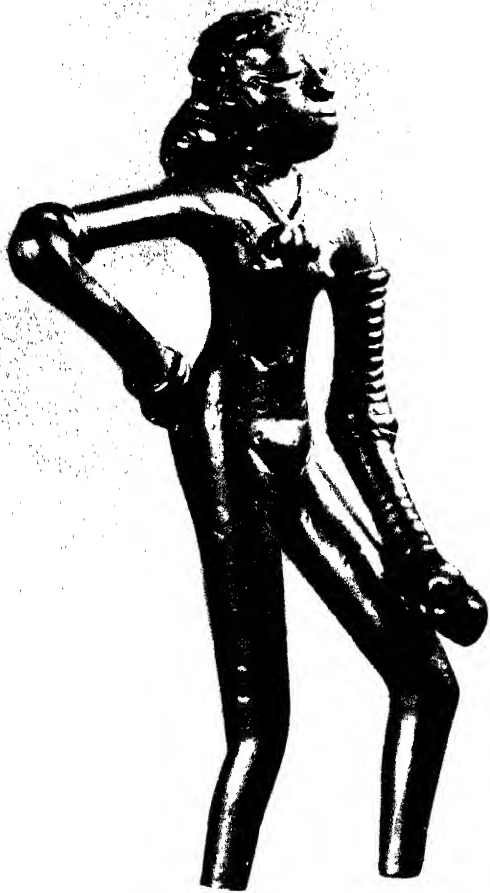
**Pl. 100. *Tara*** From Nepal or Tibet. C. 15th-16th cent. A.D. Copper-gilt. Height, about 39 cms.

In Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, Tara is the goddess of Compassion, offspring of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Mercy. This masterpiece in copper-gilt exhibits delicate and refined modelling and the figure is shown seated in a comfortable and graceful attitude in the usual Sukhasana pose with one leg folded and the other pendant, a pose of ease and comfort.

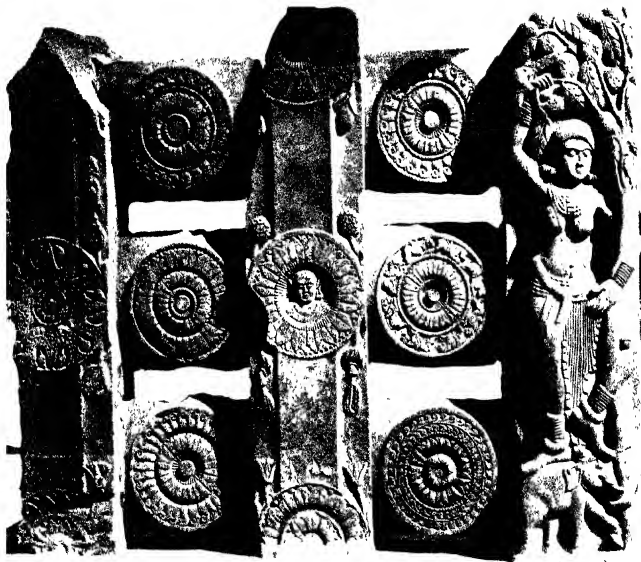
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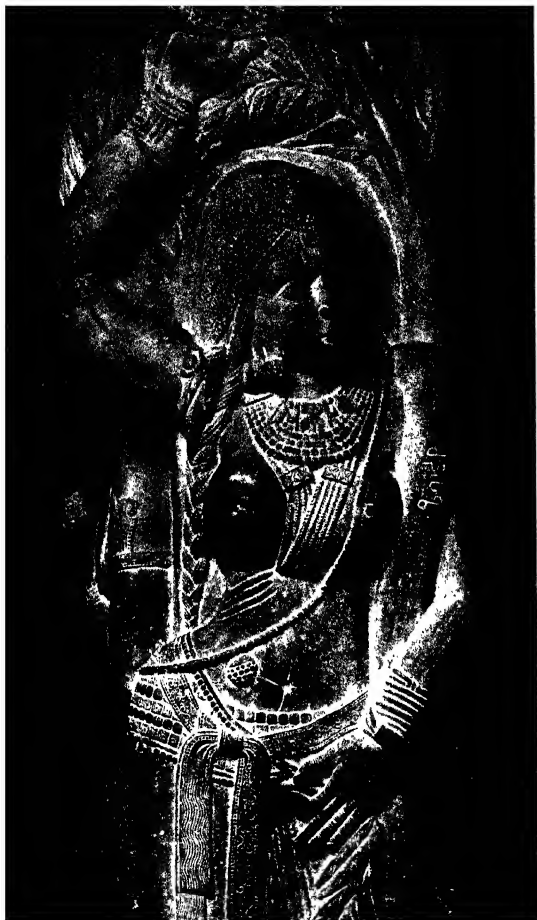






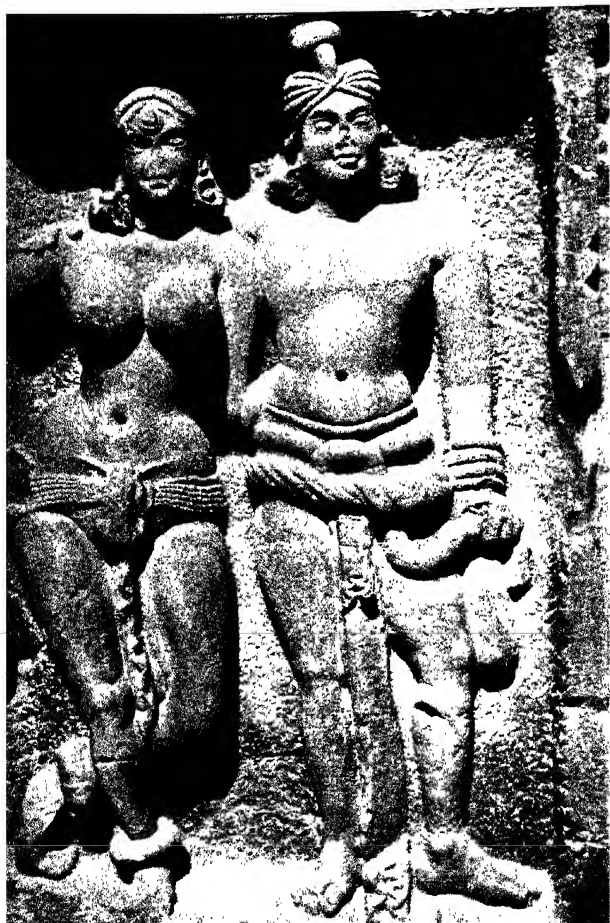








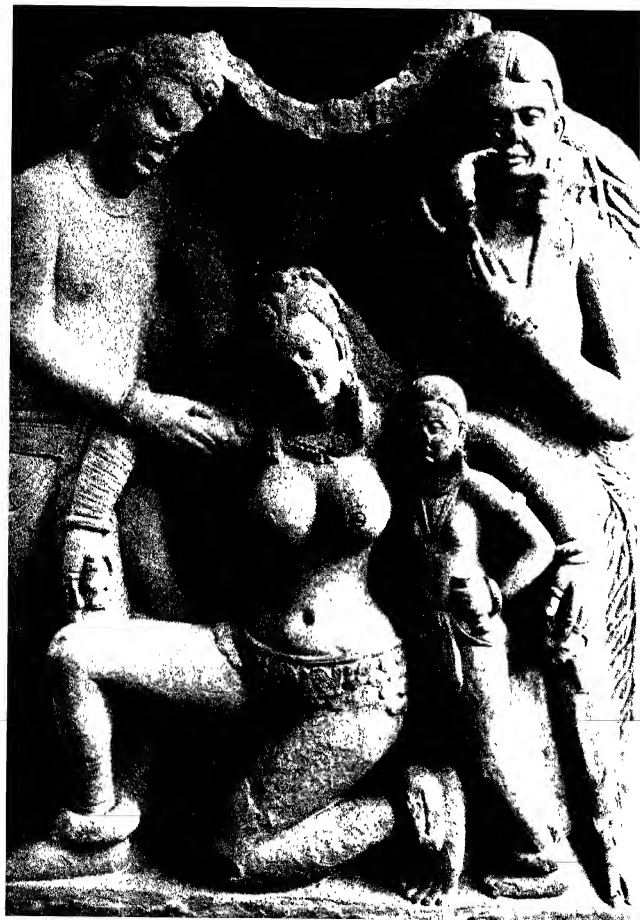






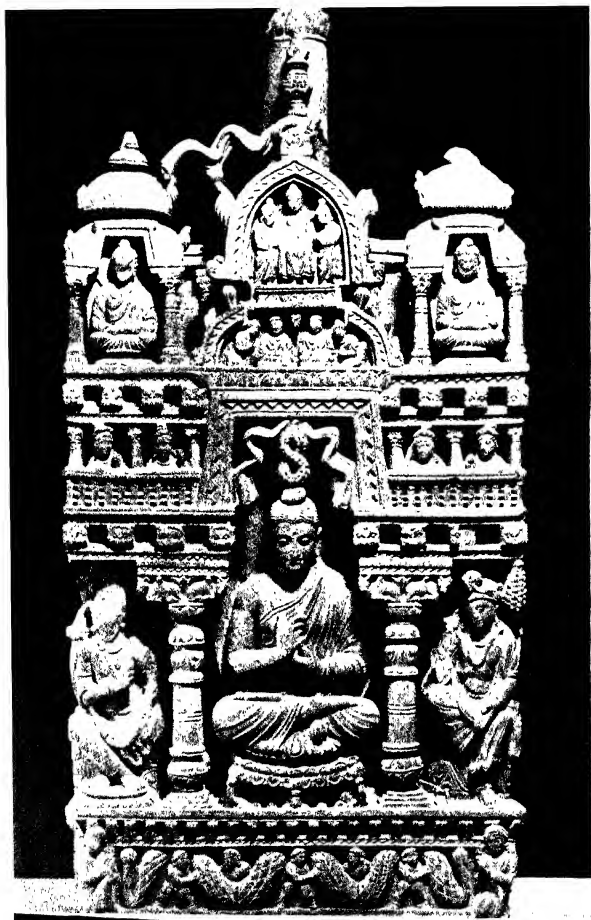




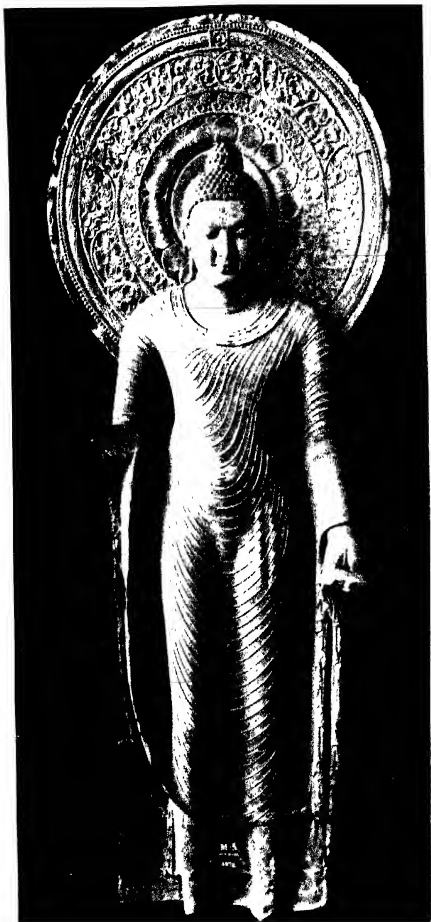








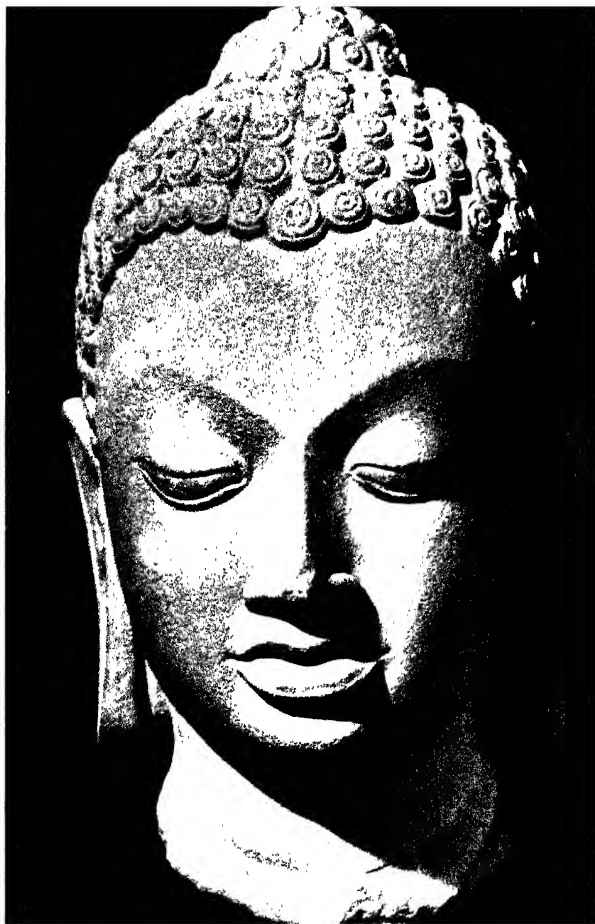








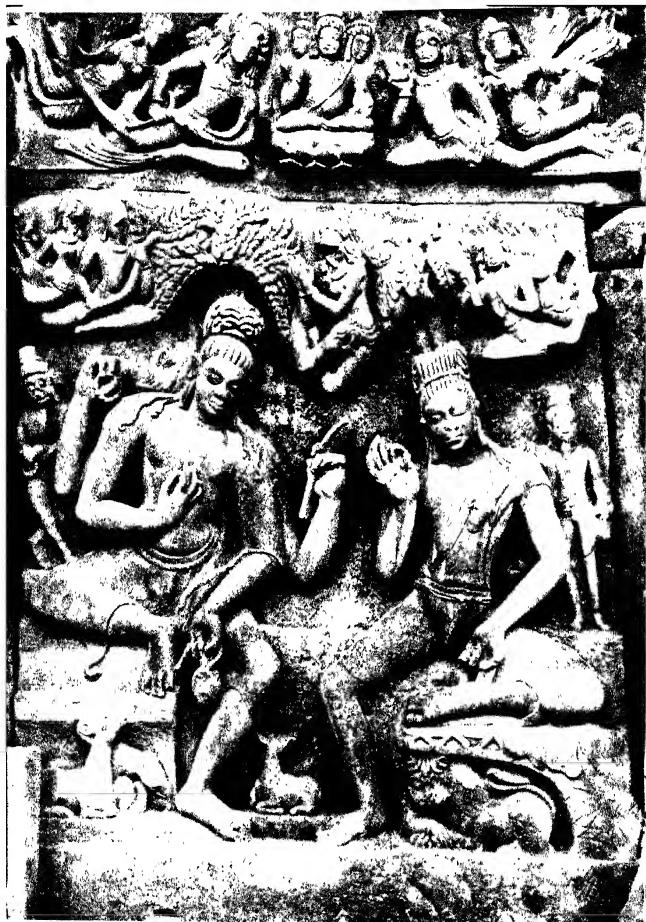


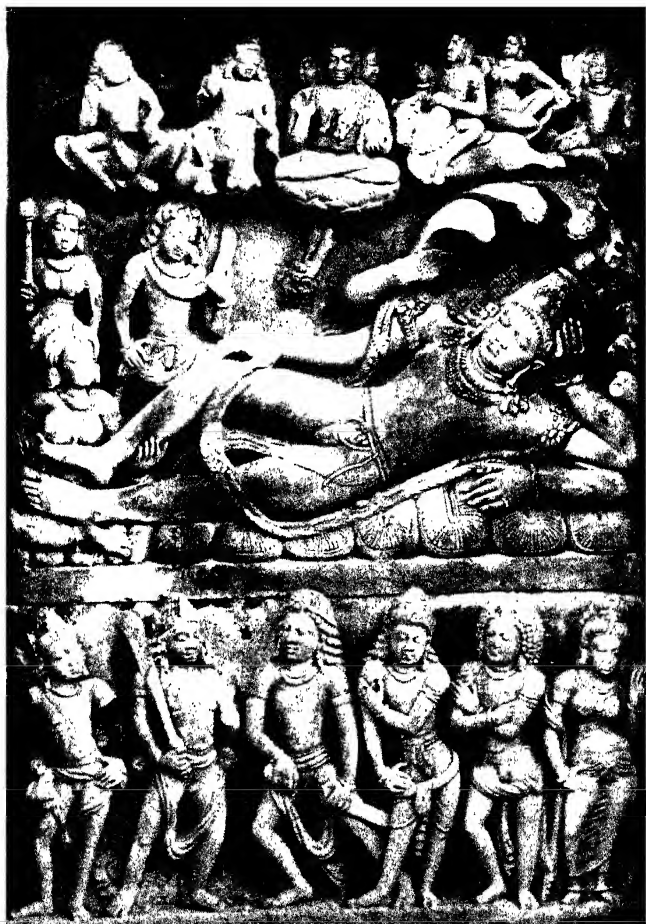






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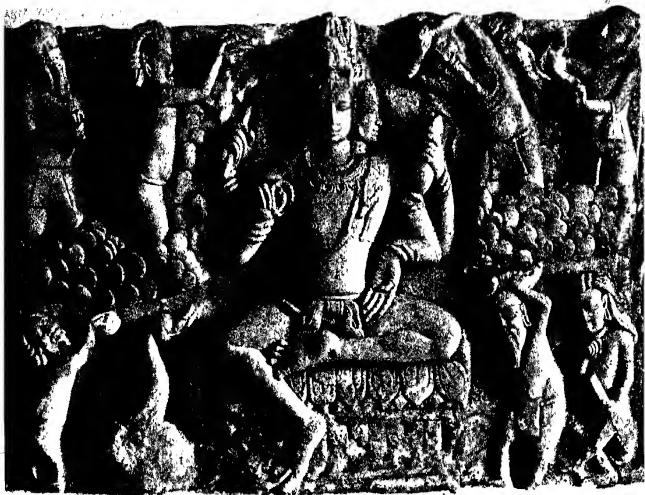












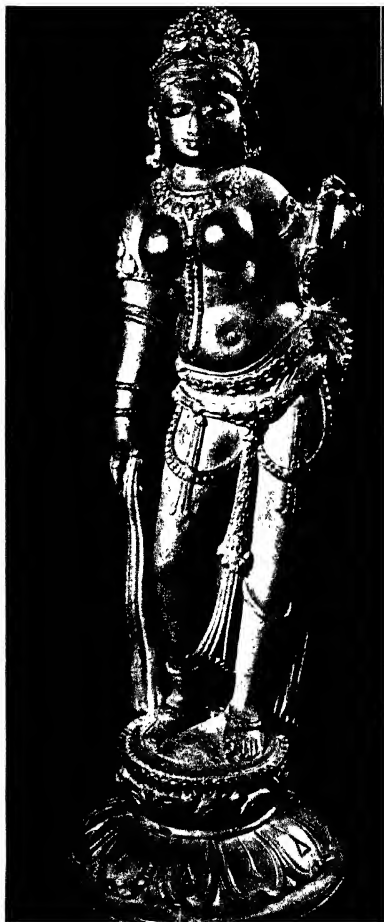


























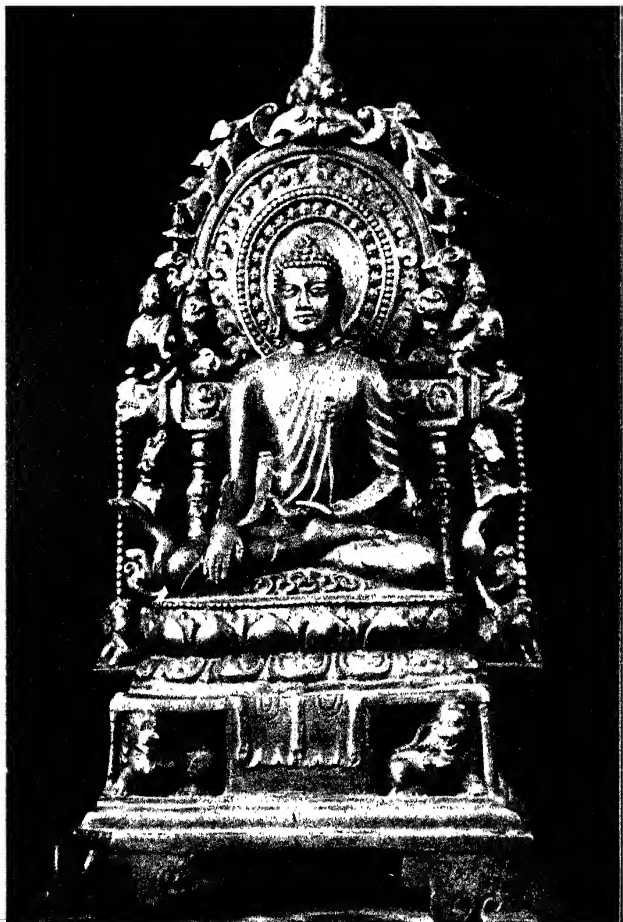




















































































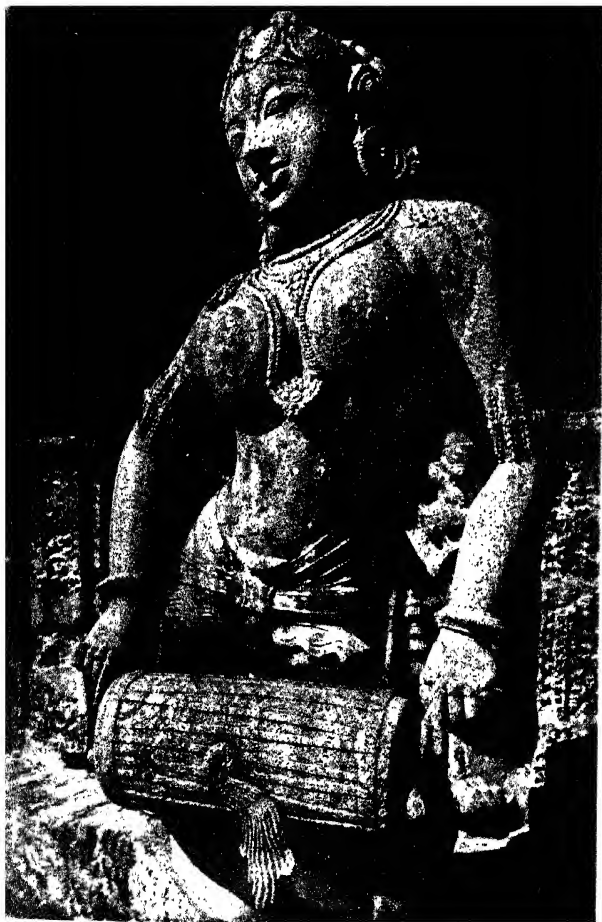










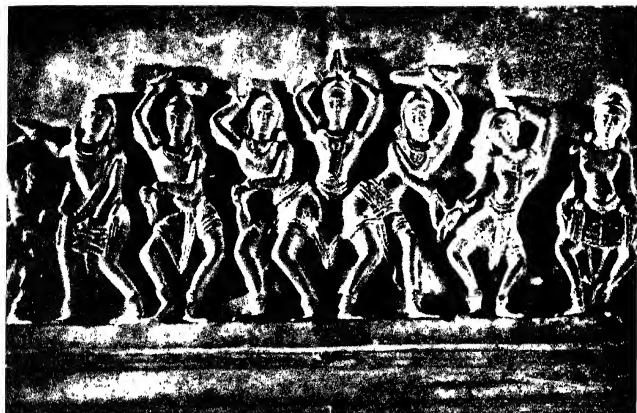








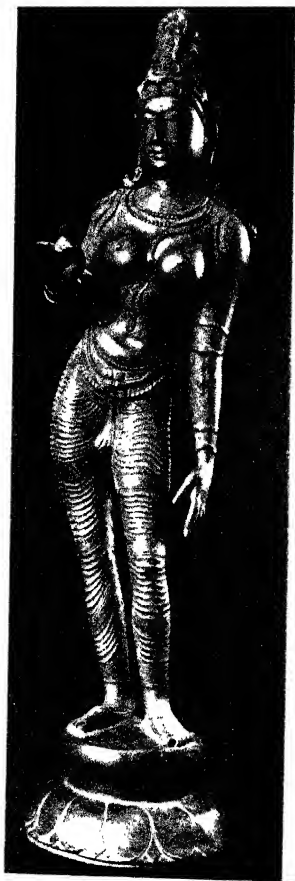






















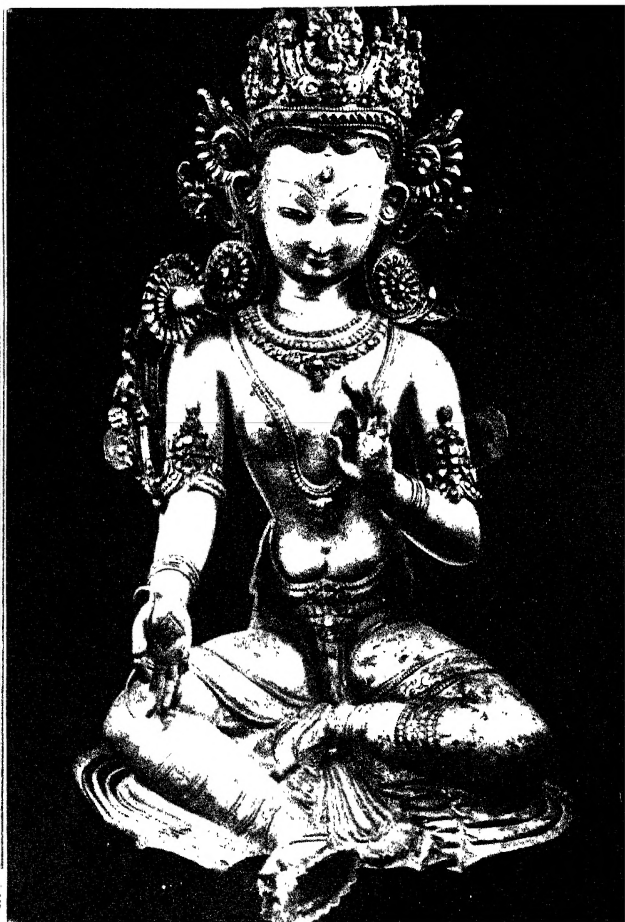














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